





# LIBRARY OF HEAVEN'S PATH

BOOK 11

*Heng Sao Tian Ya*

EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

# Library of Heaven's Path

(Tian Dao Du Shu Guan)

(天道图书馆)

by

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# Synopsis

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Zhang Xuan traverses into a foreign world and becomes an honorable teacher. A mysterious library appears in his mind. As long as it is something he has seen, regardless of whether it is a human or an object, a book on its weakness would be automatically compiled. Thus, he became formidable.

“Emperor Haotian, why don’t you like to wear underwear? To think that you’re still an emperor, can you pay more attention to your image?”

“Fairy Linglong, if you continue to suffer from insomnia, you can always look for me. I have a way with lullabies!”

“You as well, Qiankun Demon Lord, can you cut down on the garlic? Do you want to stink me to death?”

...

This is an incredible story about the heritage between teacher and students, cultivating and guiding the world’s strongest experts.

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# Chapter 1001: How Noisy!

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He had spent several centuries cultivating these nine Darkgold Venom Beetles, and he had spent an unimaginable wealth and fed it a vast amount of fresh blood before he could nurture them to maturity. In a sense, it was no joke to say that they were even more precious to him than his own son. And yet, in the blink of an eye, they had collapsed to the ground, not moving at all. It took all of the mental resilience he had to not go insane in that moment.

Seeing the hall master and the Darkgold Venomous Beetles' state, the surrounding crowd glanced at one another in bewilderment.

"Are those Darkgold Venomous Beetles... poisoned to death by Sun Qiang?"

"That fellow actually carries an even more formidable poison than that of the beetles?"

"While attempting to poison that fellow to death, they ended up being poisoned to death instead..."

...

After realizing what was going on, their faces warped in frenzy.

Given their deep comprehension of poison, it didn't take too long for them to uncover the true reason behind the beetles' death—they were killed by an even formidable poison than the one they carried!

From the start to the end, the beetles had only landed on Sun Qiang's body for a brief moment. Given so, no matter how inconceivable it was, there was only one possibility to the situation... The other party carried an even more fearsome poison in him!

The other party had stood still for the beetles to bite him, but it ended up being the beetles who were the ones who died instead...



The spectators couldn't help but feel frenzied by the sight.

This was the Poison Hall, the ground where all of the top poison users of Hongyuan Empire, or even the entire Qingyuan Conferred Empire, were at. And yet, the precious poisonous beetles of the hall masters ended up being poisoned to death? It was truly a huge irony!

"I will kill you!" the hall master bellowed with utmost rage.

At this moment, the hall master bore no semblance to the elegant and dignified old man he was before. His eyes had turned red in delirium, and it seemed like he would not rest until he ripped the fellow before his eyes apart.

However, that was to be expected.

The Darkgold Venom Beetles were his Lifebound Venomous Bugs, and their deaths didn't just signify that the staggering amount of resources he had devoted to cultivating them had gone to waste. More importantly, it had caused a huge trauma to his soul, causing his cultivation to plummet. He was a powerful Saint 3-dan pinnacle cultivator before, but at this moment... it would already be a huge blessing if he could exert the might of a Saint 2-dan pinnacle cultivator.

Boom!

Since even the Darkgold Venom Beetles were unable to poison the other party to death, the hall master knew that the other poisons he had in his possession were unlikely to work as well. Roaring furiously, his zhenqi flurried, forming a massive palm in the sky that struck down with imposing momentum.

But before the palm could strike 'Sun Qiang', the latter abruptly stood up, and with his eyes still closed, he flicked his wrist and whipped out a spear.

In an instant, his aura changed. It was even more fearsome than Zheng Yang back then. With a spear in his hand, his presence felt

as if a majestic dragon amongst the clouds, dominating the world with its fearsome might.

Huala!

He tossed the spear upwards with incredible might, and the two forces clashed with one another in the sky.

A huge shockwave burst forth from the collision, forcing Zhang Xuan to take two steps backward. After which, with a forceful step, he leaped upwards to grab his spear before directing it down towards the enemy.

In this instant, it felt as if the line between spear and man had been thinned. The spear was part of the man, and the man was part of the spear as well—Spear-Man Union. Immense zhenqi was channeled into the spear, and it was further augmented with the incomparably powerful physical strength which Zhang Xuan possessed. Even before his spear could reach the other party, the bluestone pavement on the ground had already burst open. The ground where the hall master stood abruptly collapsed inward, creating a huge depression.

"Damn you!" Bellowing furiously, the hall master charged up furiously to face Zhang Xuan.

Had it been under normal circumstances, as powerful as the other party was, he was confident that he would have been able to subdue or even kill the other party easily with his Saint 3-dan pinnacle cultivation.

However, all nine of his Lifebound Venomous Bugs had just been killed. Both his body and his soul had sustained severe damage, preventing him from even exerting a tenth of his original strength. Clashing directly with the other party, he gradually felt that he was being overwhelmed.

But... the enemy was only a Nascent Saint!

"I don't believe that I can't kill you!"



Bellowing furiously once more, the hall master drove his zhenqi to the limits, such that it was beginning to release 'gulu gulu' noises, reminiscent of boiling water.

Boom!

As the spear tip and the palm collided with one another, a loud explosion sounded. The sheer force emanated from the collision reduced all building in an area of several hundred meters into dust. The poison masters who had been hanging around the corner to watch the show suddenly felt an immense threat on their life, and they hurriedly retreated in fear, not daring to stand close.

Pu!

The closed eyes 'Sun Qiang' seemed to be unable to withstand the full might of the hall master. Spurting a mouthful of blood, he was sent flying before crashing heavily onto the ground.

The cultivation of the Saint Ascension Decipher did granted Zhang Xuan the strength to challenge opponents beyond him, but there was a limit to it... the strength harnessed by the hall master was simply too great. He was no match for it at all.

But of course, if his soul was in his body at this moment, he would have been able to use the Library of Heaven's Path to peer through the other party's flaws and design a combat strategy to corner the other party. However... having only his reflexes to rely on at the moment, he could only clash face to face with the other party, and that clearly placed him in a very disadvantageous position.

"Die!" After knocking 'Sun Qiang' flying, the hall master rushed forward to pursue him.

From the previous collision, he had gained a rough gauge of the other party's strength, The other party was indeed formidable for a Nascent Saint, but compared to him, the other party was still lacking a little. As long as he were to push on forcefully, not giving

other party an opportunity to catch a breather, he would surely be able to corner the other party and kill him!

Hu!

Sensing danger from the man before him, 'Sun Qiang' seemed to have gotten apprehensive. Tossing the spear in his hand out towards the hall master, he hurriedly turned around and fled.

In the blink of an eye, he was already a few hundred meters away.

"Where do you think you are escaping to!" Not expecting the other party to have no principles at all, fighting arrogantly with his eyes closed a moment ago only to be fleeing shamelessly a moment later, the hall master bellowed angrily. He quickly charged forward and sent another palm strike at the other party.

Hong long!

The overwhelming might of the palm smashed a huge depression into the ground. However, the other party was simply too nimble, evading his attack with ease.

"Stop him!" Seeing the other party getting faster and faster, the hall master knew that he wouldn't be able to keep up with the other party given the severe injuries his body had sustained. Thus, he turned around and commanded.

"Yes!"

Not daring to hesitate, the elders and the vice hall masters hurriedly rushed forward to pursue 'Sun Qiang'.

With great speed they pursued the other party, but the other party was even faster. On top of that, he was darting around randomly with his eyes closed. As a result of that, he was crashing forcefully into everything in his way, knocking down buildings of all sorts.

In just a few moments, the entire island was cloaked in a massive

cloud of dust. Even the ancient buildings which had stood proudly for innumerable years as the heritage of the Poison Hall hadn't been spared from the destruction.

Looking at how the heritage which the predecessors had entrusted to his hands been devastated by the fellow before him, the hall master felt as if his head was going to split apart. Flicking his wrist, he whipped out a token and infused zhenqi into it. The token gradually rose to the air, and seemingly communicating with some kind of unique power, it emanated a blinding radiance.

"I am the 30th Hall Master of the Poison Hall. I command for the activation of the Great Guardian Formation..."

Hong long long!

As the voice sounded, the light radiated by the token grew brighter and brighter. The massive formation which hid the entire island seemed to have been awakened by some kind of unique power, and it gradually whirled into action.

The formation of the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall's founding ancestor was not only able to hide the island, it could also corner and poison to death any invaders of the island easily!

The fellow was willfully causing destruction as he escaped. If he was left to be, the innumerable years of Poison Hall's heritage could very well be destroyed.

Weng!

As the formation came to live, a powerful might burst towards the escaping Zhang Xuan not too far away.

Hula!

The power of the formation was omnipresent on the island, and it fell at a speed too fast for Zhang Xuan to dodge. In an instant, his movement had been completely sealed, as if a cage had been constructed around him.

"Hmph, let's see how you can escape from this!"

Noting the tremendous strength of the formation, the eyes of the hall master lit up as he hurriedly made his way over. However, before he could rush up to the other party, the trapped middle-aged man seemed to have suddenly received an epiphany as a look of realization crept onto his face. After which, he took a few steps back within the seal and stomped his feet forcefully.

Kacha!

The seal immediately broke.

After which, the middle-aged man raised his right hand and grasped the air abruptly.

Hu!

Following which, the token before the hall master suddenly seemed to run amok, and it flew straight into the other party's hand.

"What?" Widened his eyes in shock, the hall master was horrified.

To break the seal and snatch the token from his hands so easily, there could only be one possibility... The other party had a thorough comprehension of the massive formation around the island and was aware of the flaws regarding it. By exploiting its flaws, the other party had stolen the controlling rights over the formation from him!

But... how could this be possible?

Back then, the founding ancestor had spent many years studying the blueprint and the geographical terrain of the island, reworking it again and again, each time bringing it a step closer towards perfection, before he finally set up the formation. There were quite a number of predecessors who were proficient in the Way of Formations as well, but even they were unable to grasp the entirety of the formation... The fellow had been here for less than

a day, and he had already made sense of it and found its flaws?

Just how in the world could such a thing happen?

As astonished as the hall master was, he moved swiftly to wrestle control over the token, which served as the key to controlling the formation. However, in the next moment, the middle-aged man, with his eyes still closed, abruptly flicked his wrist.

Huala!

An incredible force assaulted the hall master, causing his body to stiffen all of the sudden...

With the control of the formation in the middle-aged man's hand, the other party had called upon the power of the formation to seal his movements, returning the favor to him.

"Damn it!" With eyes blazing with fury, the hall master exerted his full strength to struggle free of the formation.

But before he could do so, a foot suddenly arrived right before his face.

Peng!

Cling cling cling!

Under the impact of the kick, several of the hall master's teeth fell to the ground, and blood trickled down his nose and mouth.

"Sun Qiang, how dare you strike me? I will tear you apart..." the hall master roared furiously.

Yet, before he could finish his words, the other party's punches and kicks fell in rapid succession on him, effectively silencing him.

Pilipala!

Within just ten breaths, the hall master had already sustained at least forty fists and sixty kicks, leaving his dignified face distorted in an almost comical manner. If thrown out onto the streets, there was no one who would dare believe that he was the amicable hall

master.

Under normal circumstances, even if he was unable to kill the other party, the other party wouldn't be able to harm him easily either.

Who could have known that his decision to draw upon the formation to corner the other party would backfire on him instead? He ended up handing power over to the other party's hand, giving the other party an opportunity to pummel him viciously. At that moment, the hall master felt so frustrated that he felt like his mind was going to explode.

He was the head of the Poison Hall, the most powerful and authoritative man of the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall!

Yet, for his formation to be used against him like that, what the heck was this...

Why did it feel like the other party was the hall master instead whereas he was the invader?

"Hall master..."

The elders and vice hall masters who had rushed over to help arrived at this moment. Upon the hall master being on the verge of death from being pummeled by 'Sun Qiang', they scratched their heads in bewilderment, not knowing what they should do.

They thought that with the hall master making a move himself, victory would be theirs to clinch. They would be able to get even the other party and vie back their dignity. Yet, who could have thought that their hall master would first have his Lifebound Venomous Bugs being poisoned to death first before being pummeled so pitifully...

"Retract your killing intent towards Sun Qiang! Otherwise, he will kill you..." Noting that the hall master was on the verge of death, an elder suddenly recalled the situation earlier and shouted.

"Retract my killing intent?"

The swollen-faced hall master had no idea how that would aid him in his current plight, but there must be a rationale for that elder to utter such words. Thus, suppressing his rage, he attempted to quench the killing intent he had for the other party.

Right after doing so, 'Sun Qiang' indeed came to a halt. He sat down on the ground not too far away and continued to cultivate.

From the start to the end, he had never opened his eyes, not even for an instant. It was as if everything he had done thus far was a product of his sleepwalking.

"This... What is going on? I was actually pummeled by a sleepwalking person?"

The eyes of the hall master reddened in indignance.

As the head of the Poison Hall, it would be one thing for him to be pummeled by an expert, but the other party was just a Nascent Saint, a sleepwalking one at that!

What a farce this was!

...

At this moment, Zhang Xuan's soul had just finished collecting the books on the third floor of the Compendium Hall.

Sensing a torrent of spiritual energy gathering outside, as if a formation coming into life, Zhang Xuan frowned in displeasure. After which, the deafening ruckus of innumerable buildings being collapsed reverberated relentlessly in the air.

Eventually, Zhang Xuan snapped in annoyance, "How noisy! Can't they quieten down a little? I am trying to read here!"

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# Chapter 1002: Irreconcilable

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Zhang Xuan was seething with anger.

Where was he? The Poison Hall!

A place isolated from the world, filled with countless formidable poison masters... Shouldn't it be an extremely peaceful place where everyone diligent strove to create the best poison they could?

'Dang lang!', 'hong long!', 'boom!'... Just what the heck were those? It was not as if they were some kind of demolition company...

All he wanted was some peace so that he could finish reading all of the books in a single go... But with such noise, how was he supposed to do so?

Seriously, did the poison masters know no civility at all?

That was really too much!

He would really need to talk to Elder Xu about this matter so that he could enforce some order around here.

"Forget it, I will just have to tolerate it for this period of time!" Zhang Xuan shook his head.

In any case, he was just a guest. He would have to leave very soon, so all he had to do was to tolerate the incivility of those poison masters for the time being.

Having collected the books in the first three floors into the Library of Heaven's Path, Zhang Xuan's comprehension of poison had reached 3-star pinnacle.

Even though the books were rich in content, there was nothing much regarding the cure for the Innate Poison Body. Most of the books that touched on it only introduced it as an extremely fearsome constitution. It rarely appeared in the world, perhaps not

even once in ten thousand years, but the moment it did, a devastating calamity could possibly befall on the world.

According to the records, the founder of the Poison Hall possessed the Innate Poison Body as well. There was an incident where the founder of the Poison Hall had clashed with Kong shi, and even the latter had to tread carefully around it, fearful of its might.

"There is nothing at the moment, but I might be able to find a solution once I go through the books in the higher floors..." Zhang Xuan sighed deeply as he consoled himself.

However, considering how noisy it was, it was unlikely that he would be able to make much progress. Thus, he decided to leave for the moment and return later on.

Thus, he returned back to the first floor and slipped past the two guards at the entrance, leaving the Compendium Hall. However, just as he was about to return back to his residence, he couldn't help but freeze at the sight before him.

The dignified and stately buildings four hours ago had been reduced to rubble. Within an area of several dozen kilometers, there was not a person to be seen at all.

"T-this..." Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in shock.

Through his eyes, he could tell that this was caused by a battle between experts.

But shouldn't the battles be limited to the Sparring Hall? Why would they start fighting in the midst of the city instead?

Look at what they had done to the beautiful city...

"They are indeed uncivil, these buildings have been around for several thousand years! To fight in the middle of the city, don't they know that these are important heritages that we have to protect?" Zhang Xuan muttered as he shook his head.

The poison masters sure are lacking decorum.

Just look at the master teachers; even to hold a life-and-death duel, they would apply for permission with the headquarter first before deciding on the format of the duel. Yet, this... to start fighting in the middle of the city, reducing so many beautiful buildings into rubble... It is really hard to fathom how a human could be so inconsiderate.

With such thoughts in mind, Zhang Xuan began flying back to his residence. However, before he could get far, he suddenly realized something.

He hadn't really noticed it due to the formation around the Compendium Hall earlier, but now that he was finally out, he suddenly found that his physical body... had changed locations. It wasn't in the accommodation which Elder Xu had provided for him anymore.

"What is going on?" A look of wariness slipped into Zhang Xuan's eyes.

Typically speaking, his physical body should remain in the residence, not moving at all. For it to be somewhere else instead... Did someone make a move on him?

If so, that would be really bad.

His physical body had already acquired the ability of Mind of Void, granting it the ability to act reflexively to avert danger, but... if the enemy was an expert, such as the hall master or vice hall master of the Poison Hall, he would still be in grave danger.

After all, they were 7-star poison masters. In comparison, his Nascent Saint cultivation body was truly too weak.

If he were to return late and find his physical body completely crippled, it would be too late for tears.

Anxious, he immediately charged in the direction where his physical body was. Before long, he saw his physical body seated on

the floor, not moving in the least. Opposite to it stood a disfigured old man, who was currently looking at his physical body with malicious intents in his eyes.

"It's fortunate that I returned in time..." Seeing that his physical body was safe, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

As he quickly slipped back into his body, he couldn't help but realize something.

The area where his physical body was sitting at... wasn't it the center of the destruction? Could it be that all of the destruction throughout the city was caused by him?

But that shouldn't be!

His physical body did have the ability to retaliate and flee in face of danger, but it had always been rather reliable. At the very least, he trusted it more than his clone and Vicious, and it had never caused him any trouble before... If he was truly the culprit behind the damage, how was he going to explain this to Elder Xu?

With such thoughts in mind, his soul swiftly harmonized with his body, and his eyes slowly opened.

"He is awake!"

"Un, he really is awake..."

"He is already plenty formidable with his eyes closed. With his eyes open now, there would surely be no one who will be able to stop him... Are we going to meet our doom here?"

...

Seeing the other party open his eyes, a commotion broke out in the surroundings. Many faces paled in fright.

Even with his eyes closed, the other party was able to kill fourteen of their elders and pummel the hell out of their hall master... Now that his eyes were opened, would he massacre their Poison Hall clean?

"Y-you..."

Upon seeing 'Sun Qiang' open his eyes, the hall master cowered in fear.

Everything that had happened had dealt a deep trauma to him, causing him to feel innate fear towards the middle-aged man before him.

"Cough cough, where am I? What... what is going on?" Looking at everyone's frightened look, as if he was a lunatic that had come out from a horror movie, Zhang Xuan felt a little stifled within. With a bewildered look, he gazed at the crowd around him.

All I have done is to leave for a short moment to read some books... What in the world happened in between? For so many of you to be surrounding me, and not to mention, the frightened look on your faces...

"Where am I? What is going on?" Hearing those words, the hall master spurted yet another mouthful of blood.

The heck! The other party really was sleepwalking!

While other Saint 3-dan cultivators were being overwhelmed by Saint 4-dan and 5-dan experts, he was being done in by a sleepwalking Nascent Saint cultivator... Just the thought of him left him feeling suffocated within.

To end up in such a plight despite being the head of the Poison Hall, it sure was embarrassing.

"Calm down, don't get agitated. I just woke up from my cultivation, so I am not too sure what is going on here. Why don't you fill me in on the details?" Seeing the disfigured fellow before him spurting blood out of agitation after seeing him waking up, Zhang Xuan hurriedly consoled.

"You... Puu!"

Agitated? Agitated your head!

Not too sure what is going on?

Can you get any more shameless than that?

All of this had been done by you! The reason why I have spurted blood is due to your pummeling!

After taking advantage of us like that, you are going to shirk responsibility just by saying you don't know what is going on?

Due to the intense fluctuations in his emotion, the hall master spurted yet another mouthful of blood. He felt so furious that it felt like flames could burst forth from his eyes.

"You aren't too sure what is going on? You have fought with the hall master and came all the way here, destroying countless buildings on the way... You are unaware of all of that?" Seeing that the other party didn't seem to be feigning ignorance, an elder bucked up his courage and asked carefully.

"I fought with the hall master?" Zhang Xuan blinked his eyes in confusion. "Who is your hall master? I have never met him before, so how could I have fought with him? Could there be a misunderstanding somewhere..."

On the way here, he had heard from Elder Xu that the head of the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall was a 7-star poison master, a Saint 3-dan pinnacle expert who boasted incredible fighting prowess.

Against ordinary Saint 2-dan experts, his physical body, driven by the Mind of Void, might still be able to achieve victory. However, against a Saint 3-dan expert... his physical body would be crushed instantly!

A completely one-sided fight couldn't possibly be called a battle, and it couldn't have lasted so long as to cause such devastating damage to the city.

Before Zhang Xuan could finish his words, the disfigured fellow before him abruptly stood up furiously and hollered, "I am the hall master!"

"You?" Zhang Xuan leaped in horror.

When he saw that disfigured fellow, he thought that the other party was just a random passer-by watching the commotion... Never once had he considered the possibility that the other party might be the strongest expert in the Poison Hall!

"I was the one... who injured you?" Zhang Xuan's lips twitched.

He actually reduced a Saint 3-dan pinnacle expert to such a tragic state?

Could it be that... the strength of his Mind of Void had been enhanced somehow?

"You..." The hall master was on the verge of erupting.

"I am truly apologetic. I was in a unique cultivation state earlier, and everything I did is only out of my reflexes... I truly have no idea what is going on!" Knowing that it was likely that he would only worsen the conflict if he were to dwell on the matter, Zhang Xuan hurriedly apologized.

He was here to learn, not to make enemies. What he had to do at this moment was to find out what had happened so as to find out if there was anything he could do to salvage the situation.

After all, he had promised Elder Xu that he would keep a low profile, and such was his intention as well. As far as it was possible, he hoped to resolve this matter peacefully.

"You... really don't know?" Seeing the other party emphasize again and again that he was unaware of the happenings, the elders and vice hall masters glanced at one another with a hint of doubt in their eyes.

Thinking back, the other party had never opened his eyes throughout the entire incident. It was as if he was sleepwalking, his body moving on reflex only to retaliate against those who were making a move against him...



Could it be that this really wasn't an intentional act on his part, but just his reflexive action?

But if that was really the case, it would portray the Poison Hall out to be a clown instead.

The other party hadn't used his full strength throughout the entire course of the matter, relying solely on his reflexes, and yet, by the end of it, the Poison Hall was already on the verge of collapse... If others were to learn of the matter, their Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall would become a huge laughingstock!

"I really have no idea!" Zhang Xuan shook his head affirmatively.

He was indeed confused by everything that was around him at the moment.

His physical body possessed no consciousness whatsoever while his soul was out, so he was dumbstruck by the abrupt situation he found himself in as well.

"It's like that. You were in your courtyard cultivating, and Vice Hall Master Ming... who is the teacher of Duan Ren whom you have beaten up earlier, barged into your residence to exact vengeance for his disciple. Yet, who knew that you would disregard his existence entirely... As such, he began making a move on you..." Seeing that Zhang Xuan didn't seem to be lying, the elder began to fill him in on the matters that had occurred.

"S-so... I was the one who caused all of this?" Zhang Xuan widened his mouth in shock, and his eyeballs nearly bulged out to the ground.

He was only off for a moment to collect some books for Wei Ruyan... Who could have known that his physical body would kill fourteen elders of the Poison Hall, cripple a vice hall master, pummel the hall master, and destroy large swathes of the Poison Hall within that short timeframe...

It seemed like... he was really in deep trouble this time around!

"Indeed, you were the one who did it!" The elder nodded.

"I..." Zhang Xuan scratched his head helplessly.

His original intention was indeed to collect all of the books in the Poison Hall quietly and leave as soon as possible. Who could have thought that his physical body would place him in such deep trouble in a crucial moment like this...

Doomed!

If he had only pummeled the hall master, he could still find an excuse to put a lid on the matter and resolve the matter peacefully with a shake of the hands and a compensation of a couple of high-tier spirit stones... But he had killed fourteen elders and destroyed innumerable precious heritage buildings of the Poison Hall... Not to mention, he had even 'poisoned' the other party's precious to death...

Even if he were to take out everything he had, there was no way he could compensate for that!

At this point, this could already be deemed as an irreconcilable grudge...

"This won't do. If I were to leave this matter be, there is no way they will allow me any chance to browse through the books in the remaining four floors... Furthermore, there is no saying that I might require the help of the poison masters to resolve Wei Ruyan's Innate Poison Body, so I can't fall out with them now..."

A deep frown emerged on Zhang Xuan's forehead.

# Chapter 1003: I Am Your Founder

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His goal of coming to the Poison Hall wasn't to make a name for himself or to battle with the combat masters.

It was to save Wei Ruyan, who was plagued by the Innate Poison Body.

Yet, before he could finish reading their books, his body had already killed fourteen of the other party's elders and left the hall master in such a state... If Wei Ruyan's treatment were to be delayed due to this, how could he face her deceased father?

It was not that he didn't consider letting his clone out to replace his physical body, but his clone was even more unreliable than it. If he were to let it out, there was a good chance that all of the elders, vice hall masters, and even the hall master himself might have been dead by now.

As for letting out the Violetleaf King and the Byzantium Helios Beast... considering that Zhang Xuan had come alone, it would be difficult for him to explain the additional guests. Since the Poison Hall had isolated itself on an island in the midst of the Viridian Cloud Sea, even going to the extent of casting a huge Hidden Formation over the island, it was natural that they didn't welcome guests.

If it was found that he had brought others in on his own accord, it might strain his ties with those of the Poison Hall.

He had thought that since he was only out to study for a brief moment, considering his identity as Elder Xu's guest, no one should dare to cause him trouble. That was also the reason why he had chosen to leave his body in the room, or else his sudden disappearance would be hard to explain as well.

Who could have thought that his 'careful considerations' would end up resulting in this huge conflict?

Looking at the raging poison masters before his eyes, Zhang Xuan felt his hair stand on ends.

If everything were to fail, perhaps he could release the Violetleaf King and the Byzantium Helios Beast to help rid society of this poisonous tumor?

As soon as this dangerous thought popped into Zhang Xuan's head, he hurriedly shook it off.

He was a master teacher, not a butcher. Even though poison masters were generally snubbed in society, they hadn't caused any significant damage or harm to others. Not to mention, it would be utterly wrong to stereotype poison masters just by their occupation. Putting aside morals, he wouldn't be able to even get past his own conscience.

After contemplating for a moment, Zhang Xuan asked, "May I know where Elder Xu is?"

Under such circumstances, he could only rely on a familiar face to speak up on his stead and mediate this situation.

"Elder Xu has brought a threat amongst us, resulting in the death of our elders. For his betrayal of the Poison Hall, I ordered my men to apprehend him. He shall be dealt with shortly later!" Hearing Zhang Xuan's question, the hall master replied through gritted teeth.

Had it not been for Elder Xu bringing this man of unknown background here, their Poison Hall wouldn't have suffered such staggering losses. Regardless of how they dealt with 'Sun Qiang' eventually, Elder Xu must be punished for his actions!

"Betrayal of the Poison Hall? T-this... Elder Xu's loyalty to the Poison Hall is clear for all to see! Don't you think that it's a little too extreme to make such a decision?" Zhang Xuan stood up in agitation and hurriedly spoke up for Elder Xu's behalf.

It was one thing for the other party to hold him accountable for

this matter; after all, it was a fact that his physical body did cause devastating damage to the Poison Hall. But... Elder Xu had nothing to do with it!

The other party deeply trusted him and even offered him advice out of concern, fearing that he might meet with danger in the Poison Hall. If the other party were to be implicated by his actions, he would be guilt-ridden.

"You are indeed strong, but we can't the deaths of so many of our elders to go unavenged. Even if our Poison Hall has to fight down to the very last man, we won't back down!" the hall master roared furiously.

At this point, it didn't matter whether the other party had done it unintentionally due to his sleepwalk or not anymore. The deaths of the elders had already created an irreconcilable grudge between them, and this was not something that could be resolved without spilling blood!

There was no way the Poison Hall could let the murderer of fourteen of their elders get away scot-free. The other party might be a powerful adversary, but the Poison Hall's dignity was at stake!

They couldn't let the reputation of the Poison Hall collapse in their generation, or else they wouldn't be able to face their predecessors!

"Men, bring Xu You up here. We will first execute him before dealing with this fellow!" Waving his hand, the hall master bellowed.

"Yes!"

The elders hesitated for a moment before two of them flew away. A short moment later, they arrived with Elder Xu locked between them.

Looking at the destruction around the Poison Hall, Elder Xu's lips quivered as self-reproach crept into his eyes.

In his view, if he hadn't brought Sun Qiang over, such a matter wouldn't have happened. At this point, he couldn't help but wish that the man who had died back then was him and not Elder Xue!

"Do you have anything to say for yourself?" the hall master asked coldly..

"I..." Elder Xu's body stiffened. A moment later, he sighed deeply and said, "For causing such deep trouble, I am willing to accept any punishment..."

It was due to his inability to discern people properly that resulted in such a situation. Even a thousand deaths wouldn't absolve him of his sins.

"It's good that you admit to your crimes!" Turning his face away from Elder Xu, the hall master commanded, "Execute him!"

In truth, he also didn't want to execute Elder Xu. After all, they had spent centuries together with one another. However, if he didn't do anything after all that had happened, he could very well lose the hearts of the poison masters.

As the head of the Poison Hall, this was a painful decision that he had no choice but to make.

"Yes!" The other elders nodded before turning their gazes to Zhang Xuan with a look of difficulty.

"There's no need for you all to make a move. I will do it myself..." As old friends, Elder Xu couldn't bear to allow his friends to bear the burden of killing him. Thus, gritting his teeth, he began channeling his zhenqi, intending to direct them towards his heart to crush it.

However, before he could do so, 'Sun Qiang's' voice sounded.

"Wait a moment."

Lifting his gaze, he realized that, at some point, the anxiety on 'Sun Qiang's' face had been replaced with absolute composure. His

head was slightly tilted upwards, and his hands were placed behind his back. With an air of majesty around him, he gazed deeply into the sky.

"Since it has gotten down to this, there is no need for me to conceal my identity as further..."

"Identity?"

Everyone frowned in bewilderment...

The hall master also couldn't help but turn his gaze over, curious to see what that fellow was up to.

"Indeed!" Nodding, Zhang Xuan continued with a calm but powerful voice. "Do you know what kind of constitution the founder of the Poison Hall has?"

"Our founder possesses the Innate Poison Body, fearing no poison in the world. It is due to this that our founder was able to create the Poison Hall and bring it to glory..."

Not knowing what the other party was up to, the hall master replied. He strongly desired to kill the fellow before him, but considering the latter's strength, he knew that there was no way he could win without careful preparation. Thus, he could only rein in his rage for the time being.

As a poison master, he wasn't foreign to the matters surrounding their founder.

"Indeed. It is the Innate Poison Body!" Zhang Xuan nodded. "Then, do you know why the poisons you have used against me is completely ineffective?"

"This..."

The crowd fell silent.

In truth, this was also something which they were perplexed about.

To be able to neutralize all of their poisons and even the hall



master's beetles, could there really be such a powerful antidote in the world?

"Could it be... Could it be that you also possess the Innate Poison Body?" The hall master's body stiffened as he turned his gaze over.

The other party first spoke about the founder of the Poison Hall before pointing out how he didn't fear poison... Clearly, he was trying to drive at something!

"No, I don't." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"You don't?" The crowd glanced at one another in astonishment.

If you don't possess the Innate Poison Body... what the hell are you spouting all of those crap for?

"To be more exact, I am not too sure either. It's just that whenever I start cultivating, I will fall into a peculiar state. It would be as if another soul has taken over my body, leaving me unable to control my actions. In that state, I will be completely immune to all poisons, similar to that of the Innate Poison Body..." Zhang Xuan said.

"Another soul has taken over your body?"

"Completely immune to all poisons?"

Everyone was dumbfounded.

Are you trying to tell us a horror story here?

"That's right!" Zhang Xuan shook his head with a bitter smile. "I know that what I am saying might sound ridiculous, and I don't blame you for not trusting you. However, this is the truth... Previously, when I fought with you all, despite the dangerous situation I as in, I didn't open my eyes at all, right?"

Hearing those words, the crowd nodded.

Indeed. The other party hadn't opened his eyes once in the duration of the entire battle, as if he was sleepwalking.

"In truth, it is not that I didn't want to open my eyes, but that my body was being controlled by another will... And if I am not mistaken, the will is the founder of the Poison Hall!" Zhang Xuan said.

"There is another will inside your body... the founder of the Poison Hall?"

"You must joking!"

Everyone frowned.

The founder of the Poison Hall was a figure who shared the same era with Kong shi, and it had been several dozen thousand years since then. There was no way the other party could still be alive at this point, so how could the other party possibly possess this fellow here?

"I know what I am saying might sound ridiculous, but such is the truth. Since that is the case, why don't I continue cultivating and allow him to control my body? Perhaps, he could answer the doubts you have!" Shaking his head, a look of difficulty surfaced on Zhang Xuan's face. After a moment of hesitation, he clenched his jaws in determination and sat cross-legged down on the floor.

Hong long!

As soon as he sat down, everyone immediately felt the formation surrounding the entire island buzzing into life, seemingly driven by someone.

Following which, 'Sun Qiang's' eyes slowly opened, and a heavy and ancient voice came out of his mouth, "Why? Are you doubting my identity?"

The voice was very different from the tone which 'Sun Qiang' took earlier. It harnessed domineering authority which exerted immense pressure on one's soul. While it wasn't as intense as the killing intent of the Otherworldly Demons, there was no doubt that one's soul could shatter if placed under such pressure for

extended periods of time.

Upon hearing the voice, everyone's eyes narrowed in astonishment.

Be it the voice or the aura, it was vastly different from the 'Sun Qiang' from a moment ago. Without a doubt, they were two completely different people!

Furthermore, the aura emanated felt ancient, reminiscent of someone who had lived through many eras.

"Elder, you said that you are our founder... but do you have any evidence to prove so?" With cold sweat trickling down his forehead, the hall master gritted his teeth and asked respectfully.

"Are you saying that I need to prove myself to you? Who do you think you are?" the seated 'Sun Qiang' uttered coldly.

"It's not that we are doubting elder's identity, but... our founder has disappeared from the world for more than several dozen years, so it's really difficult for us to comprehend how you can be sharing a body with this person over here..." the hall master replied hurriedly.

"Hmph, I shall give you the benefit of the doubt and pardon you this once!" 'Sun Qiang' harrumphed coldly. At this point, he paused for a moment, seemingly reminiscing the sorrows of the past before continuing, "In truth, I am only a remaining soul fragment of my former self. It is out of sheer coincidence that I managed to latch myself onto a Seven Hearts Lotus and survived. It is Sun Qiang over here who found the Seven Hearts Lotus and brought me out of the ancient domain I was in.

"Eventually, I latched myself to his body, but I am only able to appear while he's cultivating... Otherwise, do you think that a mere Nascent Saint lad will be able to see through this formation, remain impervious to all poison, and defeat you all easily?" 'Sun Qiang' harrumphed.

The hall master was stunned.

To be honest, even at this point, he still could hardly believe that he had lost to 'Sun Qiang'.

He could tell that the other party was indeed only as Nascent Saint, so how could a Saint 3-dan pinnacle expert like him lose to the other party?

Even if his Lifebound Venomous Bugs had been killed, resulting in a significant decline in his strength, he was still able to draw forth might comparable to a Saint 2-dan pinnacle!

For a Nascent Saint to be able to stand toe-to-toe with him... Not once in his long life had he ever met such a formidable genius before!

But what was the most frightening of all was that the other party's zhenqi&nbsp;seemed to be endless. After killing fourteen elders, wounding a vice hall master, and fighting with him for so long, the other party didn't seem to be weakened in the least... That was completely inconceivable!

And on top of that, the other party was completely immune to poison!

Not only was the other party fine after being bitten by his Darkgold Venom Beetles, the other party even managed to poison his beetles to death instead... There was something clearly very peculiar about this situation.

Not to mention, there was still the matter concerning the formation...

To be able to comprehend and even wrestle control over the formation from him, that was definitely not a feat a Nascent Saint cultivator was capable of.

"Elder, is there any concrete evidence you can provide to prove that you are indeed the soul fragment of our founder?" the hall masters asked doubtfully.

This was a matter concerning their founder, and as the hall master of this Poison Hall branch, he had to deal with this matter prudently.

"Hmph, if it was just me, I would have killed all of you without any hesitation for doubting my words... You are fortunate that Sun Qiang is unwilling to see any more bloodshed and advised against it, so I will overlook this matter!"

'Sun Qiang' harrumphed coldly. "The founder of the Poison Hall possesses not only the Innate Poison Body but the Poison Soul Constitution as well... As poison masters yourselves, surely I need not say anything more on how one can verify the Poison Soul Constitution?"

# Chapter 1004: Paying Respects to the Founder

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"Poison Soul Constitution?" The hall master paused for a moment before nodding.

The Poison Soul Constitution, as the name suggested, meant that one's soul was completely immune to poisons of all kinds. For several dozen millennia, ever since the passing of the founder of the Poison Hall, there had never been another person in the world with such a constitution. If they could confirm that the fragmented soul did possess such a constitution, they could confirm that the other party was indeed the founder!

Even if that wasn't the case, an individual who possessed such constitution would surely be bound to advance to unprecedented heights in the future. It was just a matter of time before the other party became a 9-star poison master and made a mark for himself in the world.

With such thoughts in mind, the hall master didn't hesitate for too long before flicking his wrist to whip out a jade bottle.

This jade bottle was slightly different from the other bottles which he used to store his poisons. It was roughly the size of his palm, and there were bizarre inscriptions carved on its exterior.

The body of the closed eyes 'Sun Qiang' stiffened for a brief moment upon seeing the bottle, seemingly noticing something unbelievable. However, this anomaly only surfaced only for an instant. Before anyone could notice it, he had already reverted back to his impassive state.

"This is a poison which can easily exterminate a soul, the [Emerald Serenity Jaundice Poison]! It is concocted out of the killing intent of Otherworldly Demons and many precious herbs. It was left behind by one of the predecessors of the Hongyuan Empire

Poison Hall, and it is powerful enough to even eradicate a Saint 4-dan expert's soul easily. Even with my current proficiency, I am unable to concoct such a medicine." the hall master explained.

"If you truly possess the Innate Poison Body, you will surely be able to consume the poison without suffering the slightest damage."

There was only one way to ascertain whether an individual possessed the Poison Soul Constitution or not—the consumption of poison.

As long as the other party was fine after the consuming the lethal poison, it would mean that the other party wasn't lying.

On the other hand, if the other were to die after consuming the poison, it would mean that they have successfully avenged the deceased elders of the Poison Hall. In a sense, the hall master and the others had nothing to lose from this.

"Very well." Sun Qiang' nodded. With a hook of his finger, the jade bottle flew into his hands.

Without any hesitation, he uncorked the bottle, and a gush of malicious intent burst forth from it. It pierced right into one's mind, raising a violent storm in one's head.

The hall master and the others hurriedly turned their gazes over and noted that 'Sun Qiang' didn't show the slightest hint of weakness under the assault of the poison aura. Not only so, his face was gradually growing redder and redder, as if he had just consumed some extremely nourishing substance.

It was as if what he had been exposed to wasn't poison but a heavenly tonic instead.

"Legend has it that those who possesses the Innate Poison Body are able to advance their cultivation by consuming poison. As long as there is a sufficient supply of poison, one's cultivation and fighting prowess can be raised by leaps and bounds within a short



period of time... Could the rumors be true?" an elder mumbled in astonishment.

The Innate Poison Body was extremely rare in this world, such that it was considered to be something that only existed in the legends. However, there were some rumors and records regarding it within the books. It was said that those who possessed the Innate Poison Body were able to derive power from coming into contact with lethal poison that could kill others easily, and as such, they were the most suited to become poison masters.

That was also the reason why many poison masters hoped to obtain such a constitution as well.

However, the Innate Poison Body was only effective on one's body whereas the Emerald Serenity Jaundice Poison was something that assaulted the soul. For the other party's soul to not be wounded but instead nourished by it, that reflected a lot...

There was little doubt about it at this point, the other party did possess the Poison Soul Constitution!

A person who possessed such a constitution and was capable of peering through the secrets regarding the great protective formation of the Poison Hall with a glance and challenging experts far stronger than him... Even if the fellow before him wasn't the founder, it was almost certain that there were intricate ties between the both of them.

"Is this enough evidence for you?" Just as the hall master was deep in thoughts, 'Sun Qiang's' voice sounded once more.

"I..." The hall master was still slightly hesitant.

It was certain that the other party possessed the Poison Soul Constitution, but to say that he was the founder of the Poison Hall... this entire matter was still a little too ridiculous for him to believe.

"Why? You still don't believe me? If not for Sun Qiang begging

me earnestly for me to spare you, I would have all of you killed right here and now for your insolence!"

Hong long!

With a furious bellow, an incomparably powerful aura burst forth from 'Sun Qiang's' body. In that instant, the man before them suddenly felt like a divine being, an existence that was inviolable by any mortal.

The divine aura emanated by the other party erased all lingering doubt in the hall master's mind.

Without any hesitation, he kneeled to the floor and kowtowed, "Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall's hall master, Ruo Qingyuan, pays respect to the founder!"

In the fight earlier, it was apparent that none of them was a match for the other party... Wielding such overwhelming advantage over them, the other party could have just slaughtered them clean. There was no need for the other party to waste words explaining to them at all...

Perhaps, the founder might have really managed to survive through the ages by hiding a fragment of soul within a Seven Hearts Lotus! Perhaps, the person before them was really their founder!

Having reasoned all of this out, the hall master couldn't help but tremble in agitation.

For the founder to actually appear here... if the other party were to just offer them a bit of pointers, their fighting prowess would surely be able to soar by leaps and bounds! It wouldn't be long before the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall was brought to greatness!

Without a doubt, this was a great opportunity to him.

"Hmph, it seems like there is some hope for you after all!" Seeing that the other party finally admitted his identity, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. Without opening his eyes, he lifted a finger

and pointed at himself. With a grim face, he continued, "Sun Qiang over here is my savior. If not for him, my soul could have perished long ago. Thus, all of you here shall obey his words in the future. Take his commands to be those of my own as well. Anyone who dares to disobey him... don't blame me for not having mercy on you!"

"Yes!" Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan and the other elders hurriedly nodded.

Who would dare to disobey a direct order from the founder?

"Also, I was the one who killed those elders and wounded Vice Hall Master Ming. If you wish to exact vengeance, you are free to come at me!" Zhang Xuan continued.

"I dare not to..." Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan quickly shook his head fearfully. "Vice Hall Master Ming and the others are at fault for offending you, they only have themselves to blame for their own fate. We dare not to exact vengeance for them!"

"Hmph, I doubt you would dare!" Zhang Xuan harrumphed coldly as his voice gradually echoed into silence. A moment later, his eyes slowly opened once more, and his confusion was reflected clearly in his eyes. It was as if he was completely unaware in everything that had happened before, "What just happened? Hall master, I plead with you not to make things difficult for Elder Xu. He is really not to blame for this matter, all he did was to bring me here..."

Noting the look of bewilderment on Zhang Xuan's faces, everyone immediately realized that the founder's soul had gone dormant once more. Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan hurriedly clasped his fist and said, "Poison Master Sun, please don't worry. Our founder has already explained the situation to us. Elder Huang and the others have shown blatant disrespect to our founder, and they deserve the fate that fell upon them. On the other hand, for bringing our founder back to us, not only has Elder Xu not sinned,

he is even a meritorious subject of our Poison Hall. Naturally, we will reward him generously! From today onward, he shall replace Ming Zhen as the vice hall master of the Poison Hall..."

"Vice hall master?" Elder Xu was stunned to hear the abrupt news. He hurriedly shook his head and said in a fluster, "Hall master, I am unqualified to assume such a position!"

He was only a 6-star pinnacle poison master, and the minimum rank one needed to have to become the vice hall master was 7-star. If he were to be promoted haphazardly like that, the others would surely voice their complaints,

"Don't worry, they won't dare to do anything with me here. You are more than qualified to assume this role, so don't turn it down anymore!" Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan waved his hand.

The merit for escorting their founder back to the Poison Hall was immeasurable. Besides, they were still hoping to depend on Elder Xu to speak well of them before the founder on their behalf. Perhaps, their founder might just offer them some pointers on the Way of Poison under Elder Xu's coaxing...

"Alright then..." Seeing the other party insisting on it, Elder Xu eventually nodded in agreement.

He turned his gaze towards Sun Qiang once more, and this time, his eyes were filled with admiration.

This explained the other party's inconceivable immunity to and incredibly profound knowledge regarding poison! With just a short lecture, the other party was able to show a veteran poison master like him a whole new perspective towards the interpretation of the Way of Poison... The other party was indeed lucky to have the founder's fragmented soul in his body. Very few in the world would meet with such fortuitous encounter in their life.

"It seems like I managed to get past them for the time being..." Seeing that he had managed to convince everyone of his new

identity, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. He turned his gaze towards the words on the bottle in his hand once more, and his eyebrows shot up once more.

Gesturing for the Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan to come over, he asked, "Hall master, do you know what language are these words in?"

The inscriptions on the jade bottle of the Emerald Serenity Jaundice Poison was extremely familiar. He had seen words identical to them before—the map which Wu Yangzi had left behind!

This was precisely the reason why Zhang Xuan was shocked when he scanned the bottle with his soul earlier. Unable to hold his intrigue back any longer, he asked about it.

"These inscriptions? I have no idea as well... Two thousand years, a hall master of our Poison Hall found an ancient booklet from an ancient domain, and the content of the booklet happens to be written in this very language. Due to our inability to interpret it, we were unable to figure out what it means... However, by a stroke of coincidence, we found that these words are exceptionally effective in sealing malicious intents and that sort. Thus, we began using it as a seal in the Poison Hall..." Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan replied.

"Ancient booklet? Sealing malicious intent?" Zhang Xuan frowned in confusion.

He had seen the same words on the map Wu Yangzi left for him... Were the purpose of those words to seal malicious intents as well?

"Is that ancient booklet still around? Is it possible for you... to allow me a look?"

After pondering for a while, Zhang Xuan was still unable to make sense of the situation. Thus, he decided to ask for the ancient booklet to take a look at it.

As there was no error in the coordinates and labels on the map, there was no particularly useful flaw reflected in the Library of Heaven's Path. However, if he could obtain the booklet with the other party spoke about, he just might be do a cross reference between the two and decipher bits of the language.

Furthermore, two thousand years ago... That coincided with the timing which the map of the ancient domain first appeared, according to what the Violetleaf King said. Could there be a connection between the two?

"Ancient booklet... Back then, many elites of the Poison Hall lost their lives to acquire that booklet. The hall master back then felt that the booklet was inauspicious, so he ordered for it to be buried with him upon his death..." Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan shook his head.

"The ancient booklet is buried?" Zhang Xuan frowned. "May I know where it is at the moment?"

"It is in the Mausoleum of Hall Masters..." Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan replied.

"I see." Hearing that it was located in one of the forbidden grounds of the Poison Hall, Zhang Xuan decided to ask no further.

If he were to ask too much about the matter, he just might incur the other party's suspicions.

After questioning everything there was to questioned, Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan ordered his men to swiftly prepare a new accommodation for 'Sun Qiang'.

As for the matter regarding the poison master examination, considering that the other party was able to even poison his Lifebound Venomous Bug to death, there was no longer any purpose to the examination. Thus, he helped the other party apply for the 7-star poison master emblem straight.

"I will be heading to the Compendium Hall to study for a while..."

Considering Zhang Xuan had received his 7-star poison master emblem and his identity as the founder, there was no longer for him to sneak into the Compendium Hall anymore. With the current esteemed standing he had, he could just walk in openly.

"Yes!" Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan and the others didn't dare to voice any word of objection. They escorted the other party to the entrance of the Compendium Hall, and after seeing the other party entering the premises, they glanced at one another meaningfully.

"Vice Hall Master Xu and the others, follow me to my residence for a while."

"Un!" The others nodded.

Not too long later, they arrived at a courtyard. Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan activated a formation to isolate their auras before looking deeply at the crowd.

"Everyone, what are your views on the matter today?"

"Since we can confirm that the soul in Sun Qiang's body does indeed possess the Poison Soul Constitution, we can be certain that there is an intricate link between him and our founder."

"Indeed, that is the Poison Soul Constitution we are talking about! Other than our founder, there has never been another person in the one known to possess such a constitution!"

The other elders nodded in agreement.

They had a deep trust in 'Sun Qiang's' identity as the founder of the Poison Hall.

"Vice Hall Master Xu, what are your views on this matter? Can you share the details of how you met Poison Master Sun with us so that we can analyze the matter?" Hall Master Ruo Qingyun asked.

# Chapter 1005: Envoy From The Poison Hall Headquarters

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Vice Hall Master Xu You nodded as he went through what he had gone through with Zhang Xuan in detail.

"You are saying that... a Saint 4-dan Otherworldly Demon has appeared in Jingyuan City? He tried to kill you, but it was Poison Master Sun who got you out?"

Everyone was astonished to hear the news.

Otherworldly Demons possessed exceptionally strong fighting prowess, and this was even more so for a Saint 4-dan one. For Sun Qiang to put himself in grave danger to save Xu You... Just this courage itself was something they couldn't compare with.

"Not only so, Poison Master Sun has also imparted me some foundation to utilizing poison on our way here, but due to its profoundness, I was unable to remember too much of it. However, if I could just internalize the small portion which I have remembered, I would surely be able to make huge progress in the Way of Poison..." Xu You couldn't help but say.

"Share it with us..." Hearing that their founder had actually imparted some of his teachings to Xu You, looks of envy surfaced on everyone's faces.

Without hiding a thing, Xu You began reciting everything that he remembered.

By the time he was done reciting, everyone around him had their faces reddened in agitation, their clenched fists trembling uncontrollably beside them.

Just like what Xu You had said, even though the content only touched on the foundation, it was directed straight towards the essence of the Way of Poison. Listening to it had left them with a feeling of enlightenment.



"There's no doubt about it anymore. That soul is definitely our founder... Other than him, there is no one else can possess such a deep understanding of poison..." After a moment of discussion, Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan nodded affirmatively.

Even though Zhang Xuan's argument was convincing, and he had believed most of it, he still couldn't help but hold some reservations regarding the issue due to the sheer incredulity of it. However, after hearing Vice Hall Master Xu You's explanation, the final reservations he held were vanquished.

Only the real founder of the Poison Hall could possibly command such deep understanding of the Way of Poison, interpreting the most basic cultivation technique in such a profound yet direct manner.

"Alright, have our men quickly repair the demolished buildings. As for Duan Ren and Ming Zhen, have them executed for daring to provoke our founder!" Having confirmed his doubts, Ruo Qingyuan issued several orders.

"Yes!" The crowd nodded in agreement.

It was one thing for Ming Zhen and Duan Ren to embarrass themselves, but to implicate so many of them into it as well, unforgivable!

"Alright, we will stop right here today. Vice Hall Master Xu, you should wait outside the Compendium Hall. Once Poison Master Sun is done reading, call me over immediately..." Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan instructed.

"Alright!" Xu You replied.

Just as he was about to stand up and get moving, a frown suddenly appeared on Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan's face. The latter flicked his wrist, and a Communication Jade Token appeared in his hands.

The jade token was emanating a warm glow—someone had just

transmitted a message over.

Taking a glance at it, Ruo Qingyuan's eyes lit up, and he hurriedly got to his feet, "An envoy has arrived from the headquarters!"

"The headquarters have sent an envoy over?"

Everyone was astonished.

"Indeed. According to the information I have just received, they are two 7-star pinnacle poison masters, and they are about to arrive. Let's head over to welcome them."

After saying those words, Ruo Qingyuan quickly left his residence. Not daring to hesitate in the least, the others also swiftly followed suit.

Not too long later, at the elevated platform where Vice Hall Master Xu and Zhang Xuan had landed from their aerial saint beast earlier, the crowd saw a gap appearing in the formation momentarily, and a massive saint beast flew over steadily.

Standing proudly on the saint beast were two elders. Even before coming close, they were already emanating a formidable pressure that forced others to lower their heads before them.

7-star pinnacle poison masters, Saint 4-dan experts!

"Poison Master Bai, Poison Master Hai..." Upon seeing the appearance of the duo before him, Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan's eyebrows shot up, and he hurriedly clasped his fist and greeted.

The Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall was well hidden from the rest of the world, but it still maintained intimate relations with the headquarters above it. Poison Master Bai Ting and Poison Master Hai Mingjin were extremely formidable figures in the headquarters, and considering their fame, it was only natural for Ruo Qingyuan to have heard of them as well.

Poison Master Bai waved his hands as he landed from the saint

beast, and after scanning through the crowd, he frowned, "Where is Hall Master Ruo? He isn't here to welcome us?"

"Cough cough... I am Ruo Jingyuan!" Ruo Jingyuan said awkwardly.

Disfigured from Zhang Xuan's pummeling, even his wife and parents might not recognize him, let more these two!

"You..." Poison Master Bai glanced at Poison Master Hai, only to see the latter's mouth twitching uncontrollably as well. With a frown, he asked, "Hall Master Ruo, what happened to you?"

One must know that Ruo Jingyuan was a 7-star poison master like them! Even though the other party's fighting prowess was slightly below theirs, there would still be very few in Qingyuan Conferred Empire who could match him. For an expert like him to be pummeled to such a state in his own base, just what in the world could have happened?

Astonished, they subconsciously turned their gazes to the elders, and what they saw caused their eyelids to twitch as well.

They had only made a sweeping glance earlier, but taking a closer look, they realized that every single one of them was injured. There was only one amongst them who could be considered to be fine.

"This... It is a long story. Anyway, for the both of you to arrive personally, could it be that the headquarter has orders for us?" Shaking his head with a bitter smile, Ruo Qingyuan turned to the duo and asked.

It was not that he was intended to hide it from the other party, but it was simply too embarrassing!

"Two thousand years ago, did your branch obtain a booklet from the ancient domain in Firesource City?" Seeing that the other party was unwilling to speak too much about it, Poison Master Bai also decided not to pursue the matter, considering that it was likely to

be a private matter amongst them. Thus, he got straight to the matter at hand.

"Indeed!" Ruo Qingyuan nodded.

Poison Master Sun had just asked him about the booklet, so naturally, he still remembered it clearly at the moment.

"That's good. The headquarter has sent us here to retrieve this booklet." Hearing that the booklet was indeed here, Poison Master Bai heaved a sigh of relief and said.

"Retrieve?" Not expecting the headquarter to go to the extent of dispatching two 7-star pinnacle poison masters over just to obtain a single booklet, Ruo Qingyuan was stunned for a brief moment before he could reply. "The booklet is currently placed in the Mausoleum of Hall Masters. If the both of you aren't in a hurry, allow me to invite you to take a seat at the main hall first..."

The booklet served no particular purpose here. If the headquarters wanted it, he had no qualms about giving it to them too.

However, right after Ruo Jingyuan said those words, he noticed unnatural looks on the faces of Vice Hall Master Xu and the others. One of the elders hesitated for a moment before sending a zhenqi telepathy over, "Hall master, our main hall has been destroyed..."

The main hall was one of the unfortunate casualties of the devastating destruction earlier as well.

Honestly speaking, the two envoys had really arrived at a bad timing. It was embarrassing that they had nothing seemly to show them after what that had happened.

"Ah..." Upon the elder's reminder, Ruo Qingyuan suddenly recalled the matter and said, "Allow me to bring the both of you to my residence to rest then..."

"Your residence?" Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai frowned.

If they had come here as visiting guests, there would be no problem for them to head to be hosted in Ruo Qingyuan's residence. However, they had come in the capacity as envoys of the headquarters this time around, and it was only right for them to be treated as esteemed guests. What was the other party thinking to invite them to his residence instead of the main hall?"

"Allow me to apologize for our discourtesy, but there has been some unforeseen circumstances in the Poison Hall that will make it inconvenient for me to invite you to the main hall..." Noticing the displeased looks on their faces, Ruo Qingyuan shook his head with a bitter smile. "You will understand very soon..."

To be honest, he really had no idea how he should approach the subject.

Flying the way back to the city, it didn't take long for the two poison masters from the headquarters to notice the heap and heap of rubble laid all around the half-collapsed city. They couldn't help but exchange dazed glances.

"This..." Poison Master Hai pointed at the devastation before him, not knowing what he could say.

They were in the Poison Hall, and everyone in here should be their own men. How did such a tragic fate befall it?

"Hai, this matter is really the humiliation of our Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall..." Ruo Qingyuan said.

As the hall master of the Poison Hall, it was indeed embarrassing for him to have allowed it to have fallen to such a state.

Had he not been so reckless then and waited for the other party to explain the situation, such a sight wouldn't have occurred, and he wouldn't be making a fool of himself before the envoys of the headquarters at this moment.

"What happened?"

Glancing at the bruised elders and hall masters, and turning his

gaze to the rubble all around him, Poison Master Bai couldn't help but ask.

"It's like that..." Knowing that it was impossible to hide such a huge matter, Ruo Qingyuan hesitated for a moment before revealing everything that had just happened.

"What did you say? Our founder's soul is deposited on the body of someone named Sun Qiang?"

Upon hearing the question, Poison Master Bai frowned, "That's impossible! The founder of our Poison Hall, otherwise known as the [Poison Supremacy], was actually a woman. Back in that era, people used to call her the Fairy of Poison, so how could she possibly have a male voice? Besides, her entire soul had dissipated in that tragic battle back then, so it is impossible for her to have left a fragment of her soul in a Seven Hearts Lotus. No doubt about it, he is definitely a fake!"

"Our founder... is a woman?" Ruo Qingyuan was taken aback.

There were indeed many stories regarding the founder of the Poison Hall going around, but honestly speaking... he was indeed unsure whether the other party was a male or a female!

"Indeed. I haven't really read any books regarding our founder, but I heard it from an 8-star poison master before. It is said that there is also sculpture of her created by her disciple in the headquarters... To possess a male body and speak in a male voice at that, there is no doubt about it. He is definitely a fake!" Poison Master Hai said grimly.

"But... the Emerald Serenity Jaundice Poison was indeed ineffective against him! Furthermore, his body possesses inconceivable immunity towards poison as well..." An elder couldn't help but exclaim.

"As formidable as the Emerald Serenity Jaundice Poison is, there are still many ways that one can neutralize it! For example, I have a

Heavenly Aroma Detoxification Pill here left behind by an 8-star poison master. Once consumed, one will gain perfect immunity to any grade-7 poison and below..." Poison Master Bai replied.

"Besides, there are also many medicinal herbs and plants in nature that possesses the ability to neutralize poison. Putting everything aside, the Bodhi Saint Tree of the Hongyuan Empire royal family can bear a Bodhi Fruit, which when consumed, grants one near perfect immunity to poison of grade-7 and below, and this is including poisons directed to the soul too!"

"This..." Ruo Qingyuan was taken aback.

They were both 7-star poison masters, but the other party were from the headquarters, and their eye of discernment and knowledge were beyond him.

"So... you are saying that he is very likely to be a fraud?" the elder from before asked with a deep frown.

"That is not necessarily so... there are some parts to the story which I am still unable to make sense of. Despite being at Nascent Saint, that fellow already possesses strength which none of you are able to rival. On top of that, for him to be completely fine after being bitten from your Darkgold Venom Beetle and even poison them to death at that... that is a feat beyond my means as well. Most likely... the other party is on par with an 8-star poison master at minimum! But if that is truly the case, there would be no need for the other party to make up such lies..." Poison Master Bai shook his head.

He felt that there was something amiss with that Sun Qiang fellow saying that the founder had possessed his body, but there were still various aspects to the matter which he couldn't make sense of it to refute the other party's claim entirely.

What was the most bewildering was that the other party actually had no request whatsoever! If the other party was intending to pull off something, he would have already attempted to use his

standing to force the Poison Hall to comply with his commands. It was impossible that he would feign that he was the founder of the Poison Hall just to read some books!

"You said that the Sun Qiang person is still in the Compendium Hall at the moment?" After some contemplation, Poison Master Bai was still unable to make sense of the situation. Thus, after some contemplation, a glint flickered across his eyes, and he said, "Why don't I help you test his mastery of poison? If he's truly the founder, he should be fine after it. Otherwise, for feigning the founder, he deserves death!"

"This..." Ruo Qingyuan hesitated for a moment before nodding.

"Alright!"



# Chapter 1006: Poison Master Bai Visits

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Walking into the Compendium Hall, Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly.

It was not that he wanted to disguise himself as the founder of the Poison Hall, but the situation back then had left him with no other choice.

If he hadn't said that, Elder Xu might very well have lost his life. At the same time, he would have also fallen out completely with the Poison Hall, never to reconcile with one another. While it was wrong for him to have fooled the other party like that, at the very least, he did manage to resolve the problem perfectly. Not only so, he had even been given access to the Compendium Hall as well.

Speaking of disguising as the founder of the Poison Hall, it was really fortunate he had the Violetleaf King's Button of Disguise with him.

It was due to such an artifact that he had been able to disguise Vicious' powerful killing intent as the aura of a powerful human, making Ruo Qingyuan and the others not dare to doubt him. Otherwise, everyone would immediately have realized that Vicious was an Otherworldly Demon, and instead of instilling deference into them, he would only have further worsened the conflict.

However, the effects of the Button of Disguise were still rather lacking as compared to that of Kong shi's writing. It was sufficient to fool a poison master, but it would have been hard to do the same before the discerning eyes of a master teacher.

But still, they will probably figure it out soon enough. I should quickly finish reading through my books first!

While Zhang Xuan did manage to scare the others for the time being, there were many parts of his stories that didn't make sense if one were to think deeper into it. The urgent matter at hand was

for him to quickly finish reading the books. As soon as he found a way to resolve Wei Ruyan's condition, he would be able to leave the Poison Hall. This way, the matter could be resolved entirely.

With such thoughts in mind, Zhang Xuan proceeded on to the fourth floor without any hesitation.

The books on this floor was clearly fewer than that in the third floor. However, the content harnessed within them was far more profound, reaching the level of a 4-star poison master and beyond.

Scanning his gaze over the rows of bookshelves, Zhang Xuan collected the books into his Library of Heaven's Path and converted them into his own knowledge. The more books he collected, the deeper his understanding of poison became.

Within less than two hours, he finished reading through everything on that floor. Thus, he moved on to the fifth floor.

The books on the fifth floor was targeted toward 5-star poison masters, and the number of books was significantly smaller than that of the previous floor once more. Within less than an hour, Zhang Xuan had already managed to collect everything in the room.

Still nothing at all?

After scanning through the books on the fifth floor but still finding no useful news regarding the Innate Poison Body, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but panic.

There were only seven floors to the Compendium Hall, and being at the fifth, he had already covered more than half of the knowledge harnessed in there. Yet, there was still no clue whatsoever. Could it be that the solution to the Innate Poison Body couldn't be found here either?

If that was the case, it would truly be a calamity!

While Wei Ruyan's condition was still stable at the moment, there was no knowing if she could hold on long enough for Zhang

Xuan to take her to a higher ranked Poison Hall.

Knowing that it was pointless to panic, Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella in distress before moving on. Forget it, I should just continue for now. If there is still nothing after I go through the last two floors, I will just have to think of another solution.

The books on the sixth floor numbered less than ten thousand. Zhang Xuan walked slowly along the bookshelves, taking in everything in sight. Just as he had finally finished taking everything in and was just about to head to the next floor, 'jiya!', the door to the room abruptly opened, and a figure walked in.

The other party was an old man who seemed to be in his sixties. He had a snowy white beard and wrinkly face, but his eyes had a sharp glint, reminiscent of an eagle. His clothes were plain and unimpressive, and he didn't don a poison master emblem on his chest, making it impossible to determine his rank.

Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan paid the other party no heed and headed straight for the stairs toward the seventh floor. At that moment, however, Zhang Xuan abruptly heard Vicious' voice in his mind.

"Master, that person is even stronger than Ruo Qingyuan. His cultivation has most likely reached Saint 4-dan..."

"Saint 4-dan? A 7-star poison master?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

Wasn't the strongest man in the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall Ruo Qingyuan? Considering that Ruo Qingyuan was only at Saint 3-dan himself, where in the world did this Saint 4-dan pop out from?

At Saint 4-dan, the other party possessed might that was comparable to the Violetleaf King!

"That's right. He might have concealed his cultivation well, but there is no way he can fool my eyes!" Vicious said discreetly.

After swallowing the Primordial Spirit of the Waterleaf King, Vicious had recovered yet another portion of his cultivation, allowing him to see through the old man without the other party noticing his presence.

Frowning deeply, Zhang Xuan suddenly felt extremely wary of the old man before him. For a Saint 4-dan to walk in here abruptly... What is he up to?

Zhang Xuan was considering whether or not he should toss the Violetleaf King and Otherworldly Demon puppets out to take the initiative and preemptively subdue the other party when he suddenly thought of something, and he came to a halt.

For an expert of the other party's caliber to appear here, there was no way the other party was here to read books or to roam around. No doubt about it, the other party was here to find him.

The reason the other party walked around the area instead of making a move on him directly showed that the other party wasn't intending on provoking him. Instead, the other party was trying to sound him out, possibly out of doubt of what he had just said!

If the other party was only attempting to sound him out, there would be no need for him to bring the Violetleaf King out. Otherwise, if he created a huge ruckus, he would only undo all the effort he had just put into appeasing the Poison Hall. On top of that, if the books on the seventh floor were to be destroyed in the midst of the fight, he would only be making things even more difficult for himself.

A Saint 4-dan expert has already forged his Primordial Spirit, so it won't be that easy for me to fool him...

Naturally, it would be best if Zhang Xuan could resolve this issue silently. However, there was no way fooling an expert as powerful as the other party could be an easy task.

His claim that he possessed the Poison Soul Constitution was

backed by the fact that he had been able to survive the Emerald Serenity Jaundice Poison, making Ruo Qingyuan and the others unable to doubt him. However, such a trick wouldn't work on a Primordial Spirit realm expert.

One who possessed a Primordial Spirit could peer into the soul of another directly to assess it. Zhang Xuan had only gained considerable immunity to poison due to the exchange of soul essence with Wei Ruyan; he didn't possess the real Poison Soul Constitution. Thus, if the other party were to check his soul, it was very possible that he could be exposed!

Thus, the most important matter at hand was for him to prevent the other party from checking his Primordial Soul!

But how could this be done?

...

While Zhang Xuan was in deep thought, the old man was also assessing him with a deep gaze.

The middle-aged man in front of him was indeed only a Nascent Saint cultivator. There was nothing particularly special about him, and his appearance was also so-so, perhaps looking a little repulsive even.

It was truly a wonder to him how Ruo Qingyuan and the others had been fooled so easily, entirely convinced that the other party carried the soul of the founder within him.

Just as the old man was just about to speak, the fellow before him abruptly rushed forward, heading toward a shelf of books.

"Hmm?" The old man frowned.

Could it be that the other party had noticed that he was concealing his cultivation, and feeling threatened, he was trying to escape as far as he could?

If that was the case, it would truly be a disaster!

Furthermore, judging from the speed, if the other party were to really crash into the shelf, the books might just be utterly destroyed under the impact!

Those books were the crystallization of the knowledge of countless preceding poison masters in the Poison Hall, so how could he allow them to be destroyed before his eyes?

With a grim look, the old man drove his cultivation as he rushed forward, preparing to grab the other party to stop him. However, the other party abruptly came to a halt right before the bookshelf. The next moment, he sat down on the floor and began meditating, seemingly going into a state of cultivation.

Cultivation?

The old man was bewildered.

It was just a moment ago that the other party had rushed forward as if a lunatic, seemingly intent on destroying the books before him. Yet, the next moment, he had abruptly sat down to cultivate? How could a person be so fickle-minded?

The old man was Poison Master Bai Ting from the headquarters. After learning that the person who had impersonated the founder was currently in the Compendium Hall, he had ordered Ruo Qingyuan and the others to guard outside while he made his way in alone.

Just as he was thinking about how he should sound the fellow sitting on the floor out, a calm voice suddenly came from the other party.

"What do you see?"

Bewildered by the sudden words, Poison Master Bai glanced either side of him, and after confirming that there was no one else around, he confusedly pointed a finger at himself and asked, "Are you talking to me?"

The middle-aged man before him nodded.

Uncomprehending of what the other party was driving at, Poison Master Bai hesitated for a moment before replying. "Other than books, I don't think that there is anything else here?"

They were in the Compendium Hall, so naturally, there were only books and bookshelves around them. What other answer was the other party expecting to hear?

The middle-aged man before him sighed woefully, seemingly disappointed by the answer he had received. "I thought that a 7-star pinnacle poison master, a Saint 4-dan cultivator, might have a different view than the others. But from the looks of it... you are no different from them."

"Y-y-you... You can see through my cultivation?" Poison Master Bai narrowed his eyes in shock, unable to believe what he was hearing.

He had concealed his cultivation, and he hadn't brought his emblem with him either. On the surface, he was no different from an ordinary 6-star poison master. Yet, the other party was able to see through him despite having his back against him... This was truly a little hard for him to believe.

"Merely Saint 4-dan, what is there not to see through?" Harrumphing coldly, the middle-aged man 'looked' at the bookshelves before him with his eyes closed and said meaningfully, "These aren't books but knowledge. However, it is a pity that the writers have twisted my heritage into something so unseemly."

"Your heritage?" Poison Master Bai frowned.

"Un." The middle-aged man nodded lightly before sighing deeply once more. "Do you know why you are unable to achieve a breakthrough despite having remained at 7-star pinnacle for so long? The Starweaving Art is indeed a powerful cultivation technique, but it is a pity that an accident you made in the midst of concocting poison has resulted in the complete sealing of one of

the Yuanshen acupoints. As a result, you aren't able to knock it open no matter how you try. Truly, a pity."

"Y-you... know that I cultivate the Starweaving Art?" Poison Master Bai's body stiffened in astonishment.

He had come here to sound the other party out, but, before he could say a word, the other party had already uncovered his secrets. It was no wonder he was horrified.

The Starweaving Art that he cultivated had been created by an 8-star poison master. Back when he was younger, he had obtained it coincidentally during a mission. He had thought that with such a powerful cultivation technique in hand, he would surely be able to advance to become an 8-star poison master very soon; he had never thought that he would end up being trapped at 7-star pinnacle for several centuries.

As for the reason he was unable to make an advancement even after such a long time, it was exactly as the other party had said. A mistake he had made in the midst of concocting poison had ended up harming his foundation, resulting in his Yuanshen acupoint being sealed. No matter how hard he tried to break it open, it simply wouldn't budge.

It didn't work even when he was younger, and to date, he was only a hundred years or so away from the end of his lifespan. Most likely, a breakthrough in his lifetime was impossible!

This was something that he had hidden deep within his heart, never sharing it with anyone. Even Poison Master Hai, the other envoy who had accompanied him here, wasn't aware of it. Yet, the middle-aged man before him was actually able to see through it in an instant.

Such an eye of discernment... Could the other party really be the founder?

After all, not even an 8-star poison master possessed such sharp



eyes!

"The core of the Starweaving Art lies in its breathing technique. Breathing reminiscent of weaving, guided by the stars. With the poison serving as the nourishment and the stars as the medium, the intent is to weave one's zhenqi through one's body like a thread. Yet, you chose to scatter the thread across your entire body, eventually resulting in the sealing of your Yuanshen acupoint... It will truly be a miracle if you successfully achieve a breakthrough!" Shaking his head in disappointment, the middle-aged man sighed deeply, seemingly lamenting over the mistakes made by a junior who had gone astray.

"I..." With cold sweat trickling down his head, Poison Master Bai was at a loss for words.

To be able to tell the problems in his cultivation with a glance and point out the core of the Starweaving Technique...

This was no longer something that could be explained with just eye of discernment! One had to have an inconceivably deep understanding of the Way of Poison in order to achieve this!

Even the hall master of the branch he was in was incapable of achieving this feat!

Paying no heed to the other party's shock, the middle-aged man continued. "There is no need to get anxious. Truthfully, despite the failure in the concoction of your poison and your mistaken interpretation of your cultivation technique, your Yuanshen acupoint still shouldn't have been sealed so tightly. If I am not mistaken, the reason your cultivation has stagnated entirely is due to a betrayal from someone, am I right?"

"You..." In that instant, Poison Master Bai's eyes nearly plopped onto the ground. Unable to retain his composure and bearings as a 7-star poison master any longer, he stuttered, "H-how did you know?"

# Chapter 1007: Beguiling Poison Master Bai

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Back when Poison Master Bai was younger, he had indeed suffered the betrayal from another.

It was a brother whom he had trusted deeply. Plagued with envy after learning about the existence of the Starweaving Art, the other party had discreetly switched a medicinal herb that he had prepared for the concoction of an extremely difficult pill, resulting in him being severely wounded in the affair. Not only so, the other party had even assaulted him while he was at a crucial stage in his cultivation, and that incident had nearly left him dead!

Even though he had exacted vengeance after he recovered, poisoning that wretched scoundrel to death with his own hands... the damage caused to his body was already irreparable.

It was due to such a wound that he had been trapped at the Primordial Spirit realm for so long, unable to achieve a breakthrough. This matter had become a huge regret in his life.

It was also due to this incident that he had remained guarded toward everyone before him, never daring to let loose before anyone for fear of being betrayed once more... So how did the middle-aged man before him learn of the matter?

"When you made a move against me earlier, your zhenqi stopped right before your [Yunmen acupoint](#). This shows that there is a blockage there that you are unable to pass through. That acupoint isn't a particularly difficult one to break open, and for a condition like yours to occur, it typically means that one has been injured in the past or that... he is suffering from a mental trauma!"

Without opening his eyes, the middle-aged man continued speaking calmly.

"As for your inability to achieve a breakthrough... While you did conceal your Primordial Spirit well, I can still see it as clear as day.

It is extremely powerful, and under normal circumstances, you should have been able to draw it out from your body long ago to soar into the skies. Yet, there isn't the slightest hint of zhenqi in your Yuanshen acupoint. This suggests that your Yuanshen acupoint is tightly sealed. At the same time, the zhenqi flowing through your body is very distinctive, possessing a thread-like form. Given all that, it wasn't too difficult for me to deduce the entire story!"

"Just by driving my zhenqi a bit... you were able to tell so much?" Poison Master Bai felt his throat running dry.

As a Saint 4-dan pinnacle expert, he had seen plenty of people who possessed astounding eye of discernment and powerful means that weren't beneath those of a 7-star master teacher at all.

But... to be able to see through so much in just an instant, that was completely unbelievable. He had never seen something like this before!

More importantly, the other party had never opened his eyes throughout the entire process, keeping his back toward him.

This wasn't something that could be described as frightening anymore; it was horrifying.

"It doesn't matter how I see through it; the issue is you. The reason you are unable to achieve a breakthrough is due to your lack of confidence. Without confidence, nothing else will fall in place! How about this? Since you are a 7-star pinnacle poison master, your ability to utilize and discern poison shouldn't be too bad... Let me give you a test."

At this point, the middle-aged man chuckled softly, and 'hu!', a gourd slowly floated over toward the Poison Master Bai. "Look and see if there is poison in here."

"In here?"

Perplexed, Poison Master Bai uncorked the gourd, and an

aromatic fragrance gushed toward him. He extended his Spiritual Perception into the gourd, and a moment later, he shook his head and said, "It doesn't have any poison..."

Through checking with his Spiritual Perception, he could tell that even though the wine did contain a higher concentration of spiritual energy, it didn't contain any poison.

"Do you dare have a sip?" the middle-aged man asked.

"This..." Hearing those words, Poison Master Bai froze.

He could confirm that the wine in the gourd wasn't poisoned, but he was still fearful to drink it.

"To doubt even your own judgement, how far can you reach with such a state of mind? It seems like... that is all there is to a 7-star pinnacle poison master!" The middle-aged man shook his head in disappointment.

On the other hand, Poison Master Bai's face reddened in shame.

"You might think that your greatest problem came from your friend's betrayal, but that isn't really so. What that is truly limiting you is your inability to trust even yourself! Whenever you saw your Yuanshen acupoint firmly shut even after several attempts to knock it open, you decided for yourself that it is impossible to succeed and chose to give up. Without the confidence to persevere and take the final step, how can you achieve greater heights?" the middle-aged man asked.

"I..." Poison Master Bai was rendered speechless.

The other party was right. Due to that matter, he had become deeply suspicious of others. As time passed, his suspicions deepened, and eventually, he even began to doubt himself.

"Since you have already confirmed that there is no poison, why won't you drink it? Do you fear that your judgement isn't accurate, or do you fear death?" the middle-aged man said deeply.

Facing the other party's questions, Poison Master Bai's face paled as his body trembled uncontrollably. A moment later, he raised his head and looked at the other party earnestly. "Elder, what should I do?"

Regardless of whether it was the other party's eye of discernment or understanding of poison, they were far superior to his. Even if the other party wasn't the founder, there was no doubt that the other party was his senior in the Way of Poison.

Thus, there was nothing wrong with calling the other party 'elder'.

"You need to break the shackles of doubt in you." With a high and mighty attitude, the middle-aged man spoke affirmatively. "You need to trust your own judgement and drink this gourd of wine. This is the only way for you to vanquish the doubt you have in yourself!"

Hearing those words, Poison Master Bai hesitated. But a moment later, he clenched his jaws tightly and nodded. "Indeed. If I have deemed the wine in the gourd to be devoid of poison, what do I have to fear?"

Since he had already affirmed it himself, why shouldn't he drink it?

Even if he were to be poisoned, he still had the Heavenly Aroma Detoxification Pill with him. That should suffice to deal with everything.

With such thoughts in mind, he uncorked the gourd without any hesitation, and 'Gudong! Gudong!', he drank several large mouthfuls of wine. In that instant, he felt everything he had suppressed deep in his heart being liberated all of a sudden, and a look of delight surfaced on his face. He couldn't help but exclaim, "Excellent wine!"

Due to be betrayal he had suffered once, he didn't trust any

outsiders or even himself at that. Such a problem had plagued him for the longest of time, but at this instant... he felt like he had been saved by the other party's gourd of fine wine.

"Elder, thank you for your advice!" Poison Master Bai bowed deeply.

Regardless of whom the other party was, he was still thankful to the other party for dispelling his inner demons.

"Do you believe that I am your founder now?" the middle-aged man asked.

"I..." Poison Master Bai was immediately sank into an awkward position.

The reason for his arrival there was to investigate the other party's identity. Yet, he had been exposed from the moment that he stepped through the door, rendering everything he had planned futile.

"Elder, both your eye of discernment and understanding of poisons are things that I am unable to match. However, it is still very difficult for me to believe that the soul of the founder is in you. On top of that, this matter has huge implications as well... If it is convenient for you, can you allow me to use my Primordial Spirit to peer into your soul? Once I confirm that you possess the Poison Soul Constitution, I will kowtow and ask for your forgiveness!" Poison Master Bai hesitated for a moment before saying.

He was already eighty percent convinced that the other party was the founder, but he still needed to verify it directly in order to dispel his doubts.

After all, he knew for a fact that the founder was a lady, and the person before him was indubitably a male.

Instead of responding to his question, the middle-aged man waved his hand and said, "The Innate Poison Body is also known as

the Constitution of Disaster. Wherever one went, lethal poison followed. You should have heard of this matter before."

"Yes!" Poison Master Bai nodded.

As a 7-star pinnacle poison master, he was naturally aware of the various details concerning the Innate Poison Body. The Constitution of Disaster did grant one perfect immunity to poison, but if it wasn't suppressed properly, lethal poison will leak from one's body, bringing great disaster upon one's surroundings.

"I might just be a fragmented soul, but the essence of my constitution remains. Even though Sun Qiang, whom I have deposited my soul in, does possess a strong aptitude toward poison, he is still unable to contain the prowess of my soul. As a result, the moment I entered this room, it became permeated with lethal poison. Naturally, you were also poisoned the moment you stepped in as well," the middle-aged man said.

Poison Master Bai was taken aback. "Poisoned?"

When he assessed the wine in the gourd using his Spiritual Perception earlier, he had also caught a glimpse of the surroundings. There was clearly no poisonous air or powder in the area!

Besides, if he had really been poisoned, how could he possibly be unaware of the matter? He didn't feel anything at all, so how could he have been poisoned just like that?

"You don't believe me?" The middle-aged man chuckled softly.

"It is not that I don't trust elder, but... I have spent my entire life around poisons, and I don't think that there is poison in here!" Poison Master Bai assessed the surroundings once more and shook his head.

"You don't think that there is poison here?" The middle-aged man burst into laughter before eventually sighing. "If the poison aura emanated by the Innate Poison Body could be discovered by

another that easily, how could I have become the founder of the Poison Hall, initiating an occupation that even Kong shi was fearful of?"

After saying those words, the middle-aged man snapped his fingers.

Padah!

Right after the sound echoed around the room, Poison Master Bai suddenly felt his entire body stiffening up. It felt as if a lethal poison that had lain dormant in his body all along was coming to life under the other party's control. His face paled, and a mouthful of blood spurted from his mouth. Horror and fear were reflected in his eyes.

He had been proceeding carefully ever since he entered the room, so how could he have been poisoned?

Could it be that... just as the other party said, those who possessed the Innate Poison Body would cause a calamity wherever they went, and even poison masters were no exception to the rule as well?

After retracting his poison, the middle-aged man asked nonchalantly, "Do you believe me now?"

"I... I believe you!" Poison Master Bai nodded vehemently.

If he'd still had his reservations a moment ago, at this point, he no longer had any doubts.

As a 7-star pinnacle poison master, he actually didn't even realize it when he was already fatally poisoned. Without a doubt, the other party's ability to utilize poison was far above his!

More importantly, he could sense that the poison had seeped into even the narrowest of acupoints in his body. Therefore, there was no way he could dispel it, not even with the Heavenly Aroma Detoxification Pill he had in his possession!



To remain unaware despite being fatally poisoned and completely helpless before it after learning of the matter... This was the fearsome power that one of those possessing the Innate Poison Body harnessed!

"7-star Poison Master Bai Ting pays respect to the founder!"

Having confirmed the matter, there was no longer any need for Bai Ting to ascertain the other party's identity through his Primordial Spirit anymore, and he dared not do so either. He hurriedly knelt on the ground and paid his respect to the other party.

"Rise." The middle-aged man waved his hand.

Naturally, the middle-aged man was Zhang Xuan, who was disguised as Sun Qiang at the moment.

Knowing that the fellow before him was a Saint 4-dan pinnacle expert, he knew that it was impossible for him to make the other party submit with just a few words.

Furthermore, if the other party were to still doubt him after he had explained himself and attempt to assault him while he was unguarded, there was a good chance that he might have been killed before he could even bring the Violetleaf King out.

For his own safety, he felt that he had to poison the other party first.

Thus, he intentionally feigned that he was knocking into the bookshelves so as to lure the other party to driving his zhenqi. Through doing so, he could use the Library of Heaven's Path to determine the other party's flaws and use his sharp tongue to scare the other party.

In a shocked state, it was inevitable that one would be unable to make the most rational of decisions. Through exploiting the weakness in the other party's heart, he was able to convince the other party to drink the wine.

As for everything else about the Innate Poison Body he had mentioned earlier, they were all lies.

Even though Wei Ruyan possessed the Innate Poison Body, due to the limitations of her cultivation, it was difficult for her to even kill a Saint realm expert, let alone a Saint 4-dan expert like the other party.

Needless to say, Zhang Xuan didn't possess such a mystical ability either. The reason the other party had been poisoned was due to the gourd of wine that the other party had drunk earlier.

Of course, until Poison Master Bai had an opportunity to think this matter over, it wasn't too difficult for Zhang Xuan to mislead the other party into believing that he had been poisoned due to prolonged contact with the Innate Poison Body. As a result of that, the other party would fear him and not dare to pull anything before him.

Seeing that he had managed to win the other party over, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. After a short moment of contemplation, he said, "As a result of the fragmentation of my soul, my strength is far from what it used to be, and I have lost most of my memory as well. I am unable to contain the poison aura within me any longer, and there is a good chance that it might act up very soon. Are you aware of any solutions to resolving this problem?"

Yunmen is a point roughly where your left arm connects to your shoulder at the front.

# Chapter 1008: Wei Ruyan's Treatment

## Method

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Even after reading to the sixth floor, Zhang Xuan was still unable to find a solution for Wei Ruyan's Innate Poison Body. According to the introduction on Poison Master Bai in the Library of Heaven's Path, it was reflected that the other party was a 7-star pinnacle poison master from the headquarters. Given so, the other party had access to knowledge greater than what was contained in this Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall, so he might know some secrets regarding the matter.

Besides, it was normal for a soul to suffer from memory loss if it were to be fragmented or exist for too long. Putting aside everything else, Vicious was in the same state as well.

This point would serve to bring greater credibility to his argument, making it easier for him to win the trust of the other party.

And as expected, upon hearing those words, Poison Master Bai suddenly had an epiphany. Nodding, he contemplated for a brief moment before saying, "I have heard of those possessing the Innate Poison Body losing control of their strength and bringing calamity on the world before... However, I am not too sure how it can be suppressed either. However, Poison Master Hai has read some related materials, so he might know a thing or two about the matter."

"Poison Master Hai?" Zhang Xuan was stunned.

Could it be that the other party wasn't the only envoy from the headquarters?

The Library of Heaven's Path could only reflect the flaws of the individual which it came into contact with. As Poison Master Hai had never entered the Compendium Hall, Zhang Xuan had no

chance to learn of the other party's existence either.

"Poison Master Hai is my companion who has accompanied here. He is a 7-star pinnacle poison master as well, and he has read many books regarding you. Perhaps, he might have a solution towards this problem!" Poison Master Bai explained.

"How many people from the headquarters have come here with you?" Zhang Xuan couldn't help but ask.

"It's just the both of us!" Poison Master Bai dared not lie to the founder of the Poison Hall.

"Just the both of you?" Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief internally.

If it was only the both of them, this matter would still be under his control. He had already beguiled one over, so as long as he were to push a little harder, he should be able to win the trust of the other easily too.

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan whipped out a gourd of fine wine and passed it over, "Invite him here. Tell him that this gourd of wine is a treat from me!"

"You are treating Poison Master Hai to a drink?" Poison Master Bai was perplexed.

"Indeed. There are some medicinal herbs contained within the medicine which might prove to useful to you all in furthering your cultivation." Zhang Xuan nodded with an empathetic look, seemingly showing earnest concern for his junior.

"It is useful in furthering one's cultivation? Then why would I..." Poison Master Bai was taken aback.

"Are you wondering why the wine is ineffective on you even though you have drunk it?" Seemingly seeing through the other party thoughts, Zhang Xuan said.

"This..." Having his thoughts pointed out, Poison Master Bai's

face flushed in embarrassment.

He had already drunk the wine, but he hadn't felt any boost in his cultivation at all. However, as a junior, he wasn't in a position to question the other party's decisions.

"All medicinal herbs only work upon reaching a certain dosage. You have only drunk two mouthfuls, so naturally, the effects on you are minimal. As long as you drink a few more mouthfuls, the effects will become apparent to you."

Smiling, Zhang Xuan adopted an unfathomable image.

"Drink a few more mouthfuls?" Poison Master Bai was taken aback for a moment before nodding in agreement.

Indeed. Most medicinal herbs only worked their wonders after reaching a certain dosage. Considering that Zhang Xuan had only drunk two mouthfuls, it was inevitable that the effects would be not apparent.

With such thoughts in mind, he raised the wine gourd, which the other party had passed him a moment ago, and lifted it up. 'Gudong! Gudong!', the other party drank more than a dozen mouthfuls.

For one of their cultivation realm, as long as they didn't intend to get drunk, ordinary alcohol were ineffective on them.

After drinking, Poison Master Bai closed his eyes. As expected, a surge of warm energy began flowing out from his abdomen, headed towards his Yuanshen acupoint.

For several centuries, he had used all kinds of methods to attempt to break open his Yuanshen acupoint, only for his efforts to end in futility eventually. At this moment, when he felt the surge of warm energy flowing over, he began drawing the strength within his body towards the Yuanshen acupoint too. With a light knock, 'jiya', the seal on his Yuanshen acupoint actually shook.

"This..." Poison Master Bai's breathing hastened, and he nearly

leaped up in agitation.

For someone of his level of cultivation, it was apparent what the shaking meant.

The seal of his Yuanshen acupoint was loosening! In other words, as long as he were to persevere on in the future, there might be a chance that he would be able to knock it open!

To think that a gourd of fine wine would actually achieve what his centuries of effort was unable to do, wasn't this wine a little too formidable?

"Is it effective?" Chuckling softly, Zhang Xuan spoke in a leisurely yet unfathomable voice.

"Thank you, founder!" Poison Master Bai replied in agitation, awed by what he had just experienced.

After feeling the benefits the fine wine had towards him personally, he harbored no longer any doubts towards the gourd of wine anymore.

"Alright, you can leave now. I will be heading to the seventh floor now. Have Poison Master Hai drink the wine and look for me later on." Seeing that he had won the other party's trust, Zhang Xuan waved his hands casually and dismissed the other party.

"Yes!" Hurriedly nodding, Poison Master Bai left excitedly.

To him, this journey had brought him great rewards. Not only was he able to ascertain Sun Qiang's real identity, he was even able to reignite his confidence and obtain a mystical gourd of wine from the founder which could very well become the key for him to achieve a breakthrough in the future.

After sensing that the other party had left, Zhang Xuan waited for a moment longer before opening his eyes and standing up.

Beguiling a 7-star pinnacle poison master was no easy task, but it was fortunate that everything had gone smoothly.

The reason why he was able to fool the other party wasn't because the other party was too foolish, but that the effects of the Library of Heaven's Path and Heaven's Path zhenqi were simply too inconceivable, and Zhang Xuan had utilized them perfectly to catch the other party off guard.

On top of that, disguise had always been his forte. If he wished to, not even a 7-star master teacher could see through his disguise. Fooling a 7-star poison master wasn't anything much in comparison!

"Alright, hurry in..."

Knowing that it would take some time before Poison Master Hai arrived, Zhang Xuan decided to head straight for the seventh floor to gather the books first.

The books on the seventh floor were clearly much fewer, consisting of around a few thousand books. With a quick sweep of his gaze through the room, he collected all of them into his head.

After which, he sat onto the floor and began scanning through all of the books he had just collected. Not too long later, he shook his head with disappointment on his face.

There were at least a dozen books which had records on the Innate Poison Body, but they were extremely vague. Most of them only elaborated on how powerful the constitution was, but there was nothing about how one could control the poison aura and prevent it from leaking into the surroundings.

In other words, even after reading all of the books, he still hadn't found a solution to resolving Wei Ruyan's present condition.

"It seems like it will be impossible for me to find a solution directly through the records. I will just have to research it on my own..." Even though Zhang Xuan was disappointed, he didn't despair.

With all of the books regarding poison in the Library of Heaven's

Path, there was no doubt that his comprehension of poison could reach at least 7-star pinnacle after he studied all of them, putting him on par or even beyond Poison Master Bai.

With such deep mastery in the Way of Poisons, he would be able to deduce plausible treatment methods for Wei Ruyan's condition.

But of course, to internalize all of the knowledge he had learnt and raise his understanding of poison from 3-star to 7-star, it would take several hours. Before then, he should listen to whatever Poison Master Hai had to say first.

Thus, Zhang Xuan sat down and began to wait. Not too long later, Poison Master Bai returned with an old man following behind him.

The old man was even taller than Poison Master Bai, and the aura around him was overwhelming. He was a powerful Saint 4-dan pinnacle expert as well.

At this moment, the other party was looking at him deferentially, without much of a doubt in his eyes. Most likely, he must have already heard about the matter from Poison Master Bai.

It seemed like the other party had deep trust in Poison Master Bai's judgement. This was definitely for the best. He would be spared from the effort of putting on another act to convince the other party to submit to him.

Walking up to Zhang Xuan, Poison Master Hai bowed deeply and said, "I have indeed read on a book that those possessing the Innate Poison Body can bring disaster to those around them, and vaguely, I recall seeing the treatment method for the issue on the same book as well!

"The treatment will require the cooperation of many poison masters. A unique formation will be set up to convert the poison aura accumulated within the host's body into energy which one could utilize to achieve a breakthrough... If the treatment were to



succeed, not only would the host be able to resolve the threats of the Innate Poison Body, one would also be able to advance one's cultivation by leaps and bounds!"

"Unique formation?" Zhang Xuan frowned. "Do you know what kind of formation it is?"

"I am not too sure about it myself either. However, those of the headquarters are bound to have heard of it. Also, if I were to recall correctly, the collaboration of 8-star and even 9-star poison masters would be required in driving the formation!" Poison Master Hai said with a frown on his forehead.

"The collaboration of 8-star and 9-star poison masters..." Zhang Xuan's complexion darkened as a dark shadow gloomed over his eyes.

Putting aside the fact that he had nowhere to find such powerful poison masters, even if he were to find one, there was no way he would be able to beguile the other party into helping him given his current strength!

What founder or that sort, those were all nonsense! It was only through using the information detailed in the Library of Heaven's Path that he was able to induce Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai to believe in him. Such a method wouldn't work on true experts, no matter how well his acting was!

"Yes!" Poison Master Hai nodded. "Only a poison master of that caliber would be able to gather the poison aura emanated by the Innate Poison Body and complement it with various poisons so as to concoct it into something that could raise the host's cultivation swiftly. Once the process succeeds, breakthroughs will become as easy as drinking water, and the day that you return to your peak state won't be too far away as well."

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Even though he hadn't internalized all of the books in the Library

of Heaven's Path yet, he had already browsed through all of the books regarding the Innate Poison Body amongst them, granting him a deeper understanding of the matter.

With the steady consumption of poison, those possessing the Innate Poison Body would find it harder and harder to suppress the poison aura within their body. However, if there were poison masters in the area who could gather all of her poison aura together and refine it with various medicinal herbs, it could indeed become a powerful force that would allow one to achieve breakthroughs at an astounding pace.

At this point, Poison Master Hai suddenly looked at Zhang Xuan hesitantly and asked, "Founder... Are you intending on using this body to regain your strength?"

"What's wrong?" Noticing the peculiar edge in the other party's tone, Zhang Xuan frowned.

"It's nothing much, but... founder, aren't you a female? Why are you using a male body instead..." Poison Master Hai said awkwardly.

"Female?" Zhang Xuan was stunned.

He knew that the founder of the Poison Hall did possess the Innate Poison Body, but thinking back, he had indeed never heard whether the other party was a male or a female... No wonder Poison Master Bai would doubt his identity!

"Wait, if the founder of the Poison Hall is truly a female, this will make things even more convenient for me..." A thought flashed across Zhang Xuan's mind, and his body began trembling in agitation.

Previously, he had been thinking about how he could bring Wei Ruyan into the picture without incurring the other party's doubts. However, if the founder was a female, this would make things convenient for him.

With a light chuckle, Zhang Xuan glanced at the duo. Even though his eyes were closed, Poison Master Hai still felt as if there were a sharp pair of eyes gazing on him. "I am indeed a female. It is out of no choice that I ended up depositing my soul on Sun Qiang's body. However... I have already found a body that complements my soul perfectly. However, due to certain circumstances, I will lose consciousness once I enter the body, thus losing control of the power in my body as well... This is the reason why I came to the Poison Hall in seek of help!"

"You have found a body that complements your soul?" Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai glanced at one another, surprised by what they had just heard.

"Indeed. Not only so, my soul is currently very weak. Once I were to possess the body, it is very likely that I will lose all memories. Unless I were to return back to my peak state, otherwise the other party will still be the leading consciousness. As such, I have been hesitating, not daring to make a move easily!" Zhang Xuan sighed.

"This..." The two poison masters frowned deeply.

They had never thought that there would be such extenuating circumstances surrounding this matter.

However, considering how their founder's soul had suffered the batter of time for several dozen millenniums, it wouldn't come as a surprise regardless whatever state it was in.

# Chapter 1009: Making Arrangements for Wei Ruyan

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"Actually, it does not matter whether you are able to return to the body of a female or not," Poison Master Bai persuaded.

As long as one was able to continue living, what did gender matter?

Besides, there were plenty of poison masters in the Poison Hall who had their gender mixed up.

Zhang Xuan shook his head. "That's what I thought at the start as well. However, this body is not compatible with my Poison Soul Constitution. At this rate, I will gradually grow weaker, and it won't take long before I am completely dead. Thus, regardless of whether I will lose my memory because of the possession or not, this is something that I will have to do. This is... my only opportunity!"

Based on what Poison Master Hai had said, it was apparent that he would require the help of the Poison Hall headquarters to help resolve Wei Ruyan's condition.

However, the Poison Hall was ultimately different from the Master Teacher Pavilion. If he were to send her there without any arrangements beforehand, there was a good chance that things could go awry.

After all, the Innate Poison Body was simply too fearsome. It was only a matter of time for a person of such a constitution to rise to the position of the head of the Poison Hall. However, how could the incumbent hall master be willing to relinquish his power so easily?

In order to prevent any accidents from happening, Zhang Xuan felt that it would be safer to give her a formidable identity first... the founder of the Poison Hall!

With such an identity protecting her, even the incumbent hall master would not dare touch her!

But of course, it was likely that Wei Ruyan would be unable to follow up with his lie once she woke up, so there was a good chance that she might inadvertently leak the truth. As such, he had made sure to tell them in advance that she would lose her memory. As for the founder's memory returning after returning to her peak state...

Once Wei Ruyan achieved such strength, whether she had really recovered her memory or not... who would dare to utter a word against her?

Knowing that the founder was bound to have a mission for them, considering how the other party had gone through the effort of explaining this matter to them, Poison Master Bai looked at her and asked with a determined glint in his eyes, "Founder, is there anything that you need us to do? As long as it is within our means, the both of us will even brave the fires of Hell to accomplish it for you!"

Poison Master Hai also nodded grimly in agreement.

At this moment, Zhang Xuan's standing in the hearts of the two was comparable to what Kong shi was in the hearts of the master teachers. To be able to work for her was their greatest pride, and they wouldn't back down even in the face of death.

"I don't need you to brave the fires of Hell for me. However, I do have something that I need you to help me with." At this point, Zhang Xuan paused for a moment as he gazed at the duo before continuing. "I will be moving my soul into the body of a girl I have already prepared beforehand, but as soon as I do that, I will fall into an unconscious state. If... it is possible for the both of you, I hope that you can take me back to the Poison Hall headquarters and help me regain my strength as soon as possible!"

"This... Founder, rest assured. We will definitely accomplish it

for you!"

They had been wondering what she would ask for, but upon hearing that this was the other party's request, the two poison masters nodded.

If the headquarters were to learn that they had found the founder and brought her back, they would surely be handsomely rewarded for their immense contribution to the Poison Hall. Thus, it could be said that this job was not only not a hassle, it could even be considered a huge opportunity for them.

"Don't be fooled into thinking that this will be an easy task!" But seemingly having seen through their thoughts, Zhang Xuan shook his head and said, "After I successfully possess the other party's body, my soul will fall into a coma. This means that I will continuously emit a poisonous aura around me. If you remain in close proximity to me, there is no doubt that you will be heavily poisoned as well!"

With grim looks on their faces, the duo straightened their posture and swore solemnly, "As long as it is a command from you, we will definitely accomplish it even if death is what we will face!"

While poison masters were not as concerned with rules and principles as master teachers, they would go to any lengths to protect their lineage and dignity.

"Don't worry, you won't face death. I will forge some pills tonight for you to ward off the poisonous aura. Once you feel like you are going to succumb to the poisonous aura, swallow one, and it should be able to neutralize the poisonous aura accumulated in your body thus far." After which, Zhang Xuan paused for a brief moment before adding, "Also, I will be imparting an even more profound poison cultivation technique and poison art to you. At the same time, I will think of a way to help the both of you achieve a breakthrough to Saint 5-dan."

"Thank you, Founder!" With their eyes widening and breathing

hastening in agitation, Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai hurriedly clasped their fists and bowed deeply in gratitude.

Who was the person before them?

The founder of the Poison Hall!

The other party was the person who had founded the Poison Hall, leaving behind the heritage of the poison masters. For them to actually be so privileged as to receive the guidance from a figure like the other party directly... this was something they could never have dreamed of!

"There is no need to get happy too early. To obtain my heritage, you will have to acknowledge me as your teacher. Also, in order to ensure that no accidents occur, I will have Sun Qiang control your souls. If you intend me any harm, death will fall swiftly upon you!" Zhang Xuan continued gravely.

This was not a matter of whether he trusted the other party or not. He had to ensure that not the slightest harm came to Wei Ruyan!

As the saying goes, a layer of skin conceals a human's heart.

Furthermore, a constitution as rare as the Innate Poison Body was surely desired by many.

Thus, Zhang Xuan felt that while it was imperative to offer them some benefits to them to win their loyalty, he had to also prepare some measures to ensure that the other party didn't betray him.

Knowing what the founder was worrying over, Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai clasped their fists and declared affirmatively, "Founder, rest assured. Our loyalty toward you is unwavering!"

Becoming the disciple of the founder was, for a poison master, similar to becoming the disciple of Kong shi. They would possess a standing above countless poison masters, such that even if they were to encounter 9-star poison masters, the other party would

have to behave obediently before them, not daring to offend or disrespect them in the least.

"There is no need for you to give me your answer that quickly. I will give you some time to consider the matter. You can give me your response at midnight today," said Zhang Xuan with a casual wave of his hands.

"This... Yes!" The duo glanced at one another before nodding.

"Alright. For the time being, I don't wish for anyone to learn of my matter, so make sure you keep your lips sealed. Otherwise, if the poison on the both of you isn't neutralized in time, I can promise you that you won't live past tomorrow!" Zhang Xuan said with a cold harrumph, his voice laced with threat.

The two poison masters clasped their fists and replied hurriedly. "Founder, rest assured. Not a word of this matter will come from our mouths!"

"Un. You are dismissed!" After saying his piece, Zhang Xuan waved his hand and fell silent.

Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai turned around and left.

After the both of them left, Zhang Xuan slowly opened his eyes once more.

If the both of them could achieve breakthroughs and become 8-star poison masters, Wei Ruyan would be in a much safer position in their care.

After sorting out the books in his head and compiling them into the respective Heaven's Path Poison Art manuals, Zhang Xuan slowly made his way out of the Compendium Hall.

At this moment, Elder Xu, Ruo Qingyuan, and the others were waiting outside. Upon seeing that Zhang Xuan had left the Compendium Hall, they hurriedly relayed orders to their men to prepare a banquet to host him.



After feasting at the banquet, Zhang Xuan was shown to a new, grander accommodation. As soon as he was left alone, he entered the Myriad Anthive Nest and began reading through the Heaven's Path Poison Art.

The reason he had told the other party to return at midnight was because he hadn't internalized these books yet. There was no way he could offer guidance to the both of them in his current state.

Starting from the 3-star Heaven's Path Poison Art, he gradually moved on to the 4-star, 5-star...

Cultivating as he read, his understanding of poison widened and deepened significantly.

After some time, he exhaled a mouthful of turbid gas. A sharp but sinister shimmer flickered across Zhang Xuan's eyes.

Immense knowledge regarding poisons ranging from 3-star to 7-star was now imprinted deeply in his brain, becoming his own capability.

At this moment, in terms of comprehension of poison, even Poison Master Bai would be no match for him. He might even be a match for some 8-star poison masters!

Of course, due to his lacking cultivation, it would be impossible for him to take the 8-star poison master examination at the moment. In fact, even the 7-star emblem, which Ruo Qingyuan had applied for on his behalf, was only at 'quasi 7-star'.

While poison master was considered a Lower Nine Paths occupation, there was still a strict cultivation requirement on rank promotion, just like most Upper Nine Paths occupations such as master teacher and beast tamer.

To become a real 7-star poison master, one's cultivation had to be at Saint 2-dan Spiritual Perception realm at the very minimum. To become an 8-star poison master, the requirement was for one to possess the cultivation of Saint 5-dan. This was a fixed

requirement, and there was no one who had the authority to alter the rules.

However, Zhang Xuan wasn't bothered by his poison master ranking.

The main reason the Poison Hall was so strict on the cultivation requirement on rank promotion was due to the risks in concocting higher-grade poisons. Without a sufficiently high cultivation, a poison master could very well injure themselves or die as a result of attempting to concoct something beyond their current strength.

However, possessing the Heaven's Path zhenqi, Zhang Xuan was impervious to all poison, so such a problem didn't apply to him.

Of course, this didn't mean that cultivation wasn't important to a poison master who was impervious to poison. Even if a poison master could concoct the most potent poison in the world, if they weren't strong enough to plant the poison on their opponent, it would be futile too.

Taking the current Zhang Xuan for example, the Heaven's Path zhenqi was indubitably an extremely frightening poison. However, to poison a Saint 4-dan expert to death, he still had to rely on disguising himself and tricking the other party to consume it of their own accord. With his current strength, it was impossible for him to beat his zhenqi into his opponent's body directly.

This was also why it was still very dangerous for him to confront a Saint 4-dan directly.

Just the ability to concoct poison wasn't enough. Being able to utilize it against one's opponent to subdue him was what made a true expert!

Despite everything I have learnt, I still cannot come up with a treatment method to resolve Wei Ruyan's condition. However, with my current means, I should still be able to stabilize her condition for around half a year to a year. With this period of time,

it should suffice for her to make the journey to the Poison Hall headquarters! Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

Even though the Heaven's Path Poison Art he had compiled from the books in the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall contained incomparably deep and profound knowledge, greatly benefiting him, it still didn't grant him the capability to solve the complications regarding the Innate Poison Body.

However, while he was unable to cure the root of the problem, he was more than capable of delaying the worsening of the condition.

Standing up, Zhang Xuan walked up to Wei Ruyan. He began driving the Heaven's Path zhenqi in his body, turning it into lethal poison.

It was futile to deal with the Innate Poison Body using nourishment medicinal herbs that reinforced one's foundation. The only thing that worked was poison!

Back then, Wei Changfeng had been aware of the details regarding the matter, and Wei Ruyan's unique constitution hadn't awakened entirely either, so no one was any wiser about her condition. Out of concern for his daughter's condition, Wei Changfeng had been feeding her all kinds of medicinal herbs ever since she was young, but this had only served to worsen her affliction. Had Wei Ruyan not met him, she would have long succumbed to her affliction.

Taking a deep breath, a grim look surfaced in Zhang Xuan's eyes. Maneuvering his fingers adeptly as if he was playing the pipa <sup>1</sup>, he nimbly shot surges of his lethal Heaven's Path zhenqi into each and every acupoints all over Wei Ruyan's body.

Shortly after these surges of zhenqi seeped into Wei Ruyan's body, her pale face began to gradually regain a slightly red glow.

Even though she was still unable to regain her consciousness, she was finally in a safe and stable condition, at least in the short-term.

Knowing that the other party would be fine for around a year, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. With a thought, he drew his soul out of his glabella.

"Soul Guiding Art!"

After which, his massive soul began forming several hand seals, and before long, he succeeded in severing a fragment of his soul. That fragmented soul dove straight into Wei Ruyan's glabella.

This student of his had been ill as long as she could remember. Living under the protection of her father's wings, she had an innocent personality that was incapable of scheming against others. If she were to head into the Poison Hall headquarters, a place where even master teachers would tremble in fear before, without any protection, she would surely have a layer of her skin shed at minimum.

Thus, after much consideration, Zhang Xuan decided to leave a fragment of his soul with the other party to assist her in times of need.

After that was done, he fell into deep contemplation once more. He hesitated for a brief moment before eventually taking out the only golden page that he had left. With a tap of his finger, he sent it into the other party's glabella.

This was the golden page that had formed when School Head Jiang Qingqin acknowledged him as his teacher. All along, he couldn't bring himself to use it. However, if it could be exchanged for the safety of his student, he was more than willing to do so.

After doing so, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief before moving his soul back into his physical body.

What Zhang Xuan had left was just a mindless soul fragment made up purely of intent, on top of which, there had been an exchange of soul essence between the both of them before. As such, Wei Ruyan's body didn't instinctively reject Zhang Xuan's soul

fragment. It dove into the other party's mind, hiding itself in the depths of the other party's consciousness. Even the strongest of person wouldn't be able to sense the presence of his soul. In fact, as long as Zhang Xuan willed it so, this student of his wouldn't be aware of the matter either.

The concern that a teacher had for their students need not be made known to the student. The only thing that teachers expected from their students was for them to better themselves, and that was why they could push on despite being misunderstood or unappreciated by their students. As long as their efforts could help the latter and help them achieve greatness, they would feel relieved and gladdened from the bottom of their hearts.

This was not foolishness. This was because there was a single belief that was even heavier than the greatest of mountains in the world driving them...

They are teachers!

# Chapter 1010: Death of the Hall Master

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Being a teacher was a responsibility, as well as a set of principles that one had sworn to abide by.

From the moment he comprehended the Heart of the Teacher, the true meaning of being a teacher had been imprinted deep in Zhang Xuan's mind, and he had never forgotten about it, not even for the briefest moment.

And at this point, he had indeed displayed it through his own actions.

To his direct disciples, he would impart whatever he felt would benefit them without any reservations <sup>1</sup>, achieving the true essence of 'selflessness in teachings'.

After settling Wei Ruyan, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and took out two bottles of foundation reinforcing nourishment pills. With a tap of his finger, he infused several surges of Heaven's Path zhenqi into it.

Typically speaking, the consumption of these pills shouldn't have any effects on a Saint 4-dan expert. However, with his Heaven's Path zhenqi infused into it, it was no longer an ordinary pill; it had become a divine medicine that could cure any injury and neutralize all poisons.

Furthermore, as the zhenqi was deposited into a nourishment pill, it would be nurtured by it, thus allowing to exist for extended periods of time outside of Zhang Xuan's body without dissipating.

This was dissimilar to when he infused his Heaven's Path zhenqi into a wine gourd.

Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction. Each jade bottle has ten pills. It should be enough for the duo to make the journey to the Poison Hall and overcome whatever challenges come their way!

These pills were prepared for Poison Master Bai and Poison

Master Hai. Since Zhang Xuan had decided to have them protect Wei Ruyan, he had to ensure that they wouldn't be poisoned to their deaths.

After doing all of that, Zhang Xuan took out an empty book and brush, and wrote out a manual on a simplified version of the Heaven's Path Poison Art. After which, he contemplated over Poison Master Bai's condition for a moment and tailored a unique formula to resolve the issues the other party was facing. Only then did he finally back out from his Anthive Nest and return to the courtyard of his accommodation.

With everything he had been up to, it was already night by the time he returned. Despite the immense quantity of zhenqi he wielded, he still couldn't help but feel exhausted.

Sitting on the ground, he drove the Heaven's Path Divine Art for several cycles before he finally recuperated from his weakness. Shortly after he was done, he heard knocking at his door.

It was midnight!

"Come in."

Right after those words were spoken, Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai pushed the door open and walked in.

Kneeling on the ground, they began speaking with unwavering resolution in their eyes. "Founder, we have made up our minds. We are willing to undertake this mission!"

"Un. Since you have decided to aid me, I won't treat you poorly!" Zhang Xuan nodded, having known already that the other party would make such a choice. He accepted the parts of their souls they had offered before flicking his wrist to whip out the pills and cultivation technique manuals that he had prepared beforehand.

As soon as they laid their eyes upon the manuals, the breathing of the duo hastened.

As Saint 4-dan pinnacle experts who had been cultivating poison

cultivation techniques ever since they were young, they could tell that despite the simplicity of the secret manual before their eyes, it was directed toward the very essence of the Way of Poison. If they were to follow the manual, it would be a walk in the park for them to successfully concoct and control a grade-8 poison!

Of course... the prerequisite was that he had to achieve a breakthrough in his cultivation first!

"Bai Ting, this is the cultivation technique I have specially prepared for you beforehand. It can help you resolve the problem of your blocked Yuanshen acupoint. Cultivate strictly to it, and you will be able to achieve a breakthrough very soon!"

After saying those words, Zhang Xuan passed a secret manual over.

Without a Saint 4-dan Heaven's Path Divine Art, he couldn't impart a cultivation technique to the other party and allow him to achieve a breakthrough immediately. However, through the Library of Heaven's Path, he could still analyze the other party's flaws and design a solution to resolving the issue.

In simple terms, the secret manual that he had just passed to Poison Master Bai didn't contain a cultivation technique but a treatment method tailored to the other party's condition.

As long as the other party cultivated according to the manual, the issue of his sealed Yuanshen acupoint would be resolved. Once that impediment was gone, considering the massive accumulation from cultivating diligently over many years, the other party would be able to achieve an instantaneous breakthrough.

After instructing Bai Ting to cultivate it properly, Zhang Xuan turned to Poison Master Hai and said, "Hai Jinming, execute a fist art!"

Knowing that the other party was going to offer him personal guidance too, Hai Jinming hurriedly executed a battle technique.



A book materialized in the Library of Heaven's Path. After studying it carefully, Zhang Xuan fell into deep contemplation to deduce a feasible solution before imparting it to the other party verbally.

As he was facing the duo with his eyes closed, it would be troublesome for him to write it down on paper. Thus, he decided to impart it verbally instead.

On the other hand, after hearing the content that Zhang Xuan was speaking of, Hai Jinming couldn't help but be astonished and impressed at the same time.

Just a single fist, and the other party was already able to see through the flaws and problems in his cultivation. In less than an incense's time 2 , the other party had already tailored a cultivation technique. Most probably, only the founder of the Poison Hall, who had been able to stand toe-to-toe with Kong shi in battle, would be capable of such an incredible feat!

Boom!

Before the sky even lit up, a resounding buzz echoed in the air. Bai Ting's body jolted, and an immense Primordial Spirit floated out from his body, bringing radiance to the surroundings. Its presence carried a domineering pressure on those standing before it.

Saint 5-dan, Leaving Aperture realm!

Leaving Aperture realm was the cultivation realm where a cultivator would be able to draw their Primordial Spirit out through an aperture in their body and roam the world freely. Even if their body were to meet with demise, they would still be able to exist as a Primordial Spirit. While the cultivator's lifespan would be significantly reduced existing in such a form, it was nevertheless an extremely incredible ability.

More importantly, one's Primordial Spirit would be further

aligned with nature and the world, allowing it to draw even greater fighting prowess.

Every single cultivator who had reached this level wielded destructive fighting prowess that instilled deference and horror in others. It was also the fundamental requirement to reaching 8-star in most occupations, thus standing among the ranks of the top of the continent.

Not too long after Poison Master Bai made a breakthrough, the surrounding spiritual suddenly flurried once more, and Poison Master Hai's Primordial Spirit broke out from his body as well.

After cultivating the method that Zhang Xuan had tailored specifically for them, they were able to achieve breakthroughs back to back.

Retracting their Primordial Spirits back into their bodies, they walked up to Zhang Xuan and bowed deeply. At this moment, they were left with nothing but deep respect for the other party.

Even 9-star poison masters would be unable to resolve their conditions so easily and allow them to achieve a breakthrough so quickly, but the person before them had actually managed to achieve such a feat. Who else could the other party be other than the founder?

"Alright, stand guard for me outside. Don't allow anyone to interrupt me, and you aren't to peek either!" Ignoring the looks of admiration of the duo, Zhang Xuan waved his hands.

"Yes!" The two poison masters quickly backed out of the room. After which, Zhang Xuan swiftly set up an isolation barrier to prevent anyone who peering in before putting Wei Ruyan out.

After which, he waited patiently for daybreak before removing the formation and indicating for Bai Ting and Hai Jinming to enter.

"Poison masters!"

At this moment, even though Zhang Xuan still looked the same as ever, his cultivation and aura were only at the level of a Nascent Saint. At the same time, his eyes were also filled with innocence and purity, devoid of the domineering air of a conqueror from before.

Knowing that the soul of the founder had already left his body, the duo sighed internally as they clasped their fists to greet the man before them.

"Un. This is her... new body. You must make sure to accomplish the mission she has assigned to you!" Zhang Xuan said as he gestured toward Wei Ruyan.

"Rest assured, we will definitely have it done!" Nodding, the duo turned their gazes to Wei Ruyan, and a moment later, their faces reddened in agitation. "C-could it be... this young lady possesses the Innate Poison Body?"

"There is no doubt about it! Otherwise, there is no way she would be able to contain the poisonous soul of our ancestor!"

At this moment, Wei Ruyan's constitution had already been awakened, and she was continuously emanating a poisonous aura. As 7-star pinnacle poison masters, it was natural that they were able to recognize it.

They had been thinking that their founder had been forced to choose a random body to contain her soul, but who would have thought that the latter would have actually managed to find an Innate Poison Body! They could already imagine the great heights the Poison Hall could very well be brought to under the leadership of the powerful founder. Gone would be the days where they were forced to hide in the shadows of the world, as if rats scampering on the streets.

"Founder has said that you should leave this area and head to the Poison Hall headquarters as soon as possible. While her possession was successful, she has fallen into a deep coma as a result of that.

She must be treated as soon as possible, and not even the slightest delay is acceptable!" Zhang Xuan instructed grimly.

Poison Master Bai nodded. "Our purpose here is to obtain a booklet from two thousand years ago. We have already instructed Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan to fetch it yesterday, so it should be arriving very soon. As soon as we obtain that item, we will leave immediately!"

Fetching the booklet from the Mausoleum of Hall Masters shouldn't take too much effort, so it was unlikely that it would take too long.

"Booklet?" Zhang Xuan asked with a doubtful look.

"Un. It is a booklet regarding an ancient domain in Firesource City. There are rumors going around saying that it will open very soon. Thus, the headquarters sent us here to procure it in the hope that we might find something from it!" Poison Master Bai said.

Even though the founder's soul was no longer in the other party, their souls were still under the other party's control, so they dared not conceal anything from the other party.

The booklet is concerning an ancient domain in Firesource City? Could it be... the map? Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

A while ago, he had heard from a message left behind by the old principal in the Mausoleum of Principals that there was a map of the ancient domain that was in the hands of the Poison Hall. It seemed like these two poison masters were here for it as well.

With such thoughts in mind, Zhang Xuan asked, "Regarding the booklet you are speaking of, can you allow me to take a look at it after you obtain it? I won't even touch the booklet open, if that bothers you!"

As long as it was a book, the Library of Heaven's Path could replicate it perfectly just by laying his eyes on it. Even touch wasn't required anymore.

"Of course..." Poison Master Bai nodded.

The other party was a poison master as well, not to mention, he was also the first body that the founder had possessed. Besides, his life was held in the other party's hands. Putting aside taking a look at the booklet, even if the other party wanted to take it away, he wouldn't dare object to it.

"You have my gratitude." Smiling, Zhang Xuan was in the midst of his words when the ground abruptly shook violently. A dull rumbling echoed in the distance, as if something had collapsed.

"What is happening?" Alarmed, the trio hurriedly flew out of the room and turned their gazes in the direction that the uproar had come from. Taking a closer look, they noticed that a powerful shockwave had emanated from a mountain not too far away. It seemed like there were two powerful experts clashing with one another.

"That is the might of a Saint 4-dan expert," Poison Master Bai remarked with a deep frown.

"That is... where the Mausoleum of Hall Masters is! Quick, let's head over to take a look!"

The strongest expert in the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall was Ruo Qingyuan, who only possessed the cultivation of Saint 3-dan pinnacle. For the might of a Saint 4-dan to burst forth in the Poison Hall, it was apparent that something must have happened!

And most important of all, the ruckus originated from the Mausoleum of Hall Masters!

That was where the booklet was stored!

Sou! Sou! Sou!

With incomparably fast speed, it took merely the blink of an eye for them to arrive at the Mausoleum of Hall Masters. At this moment, the entire building had already collapsed. Vice Hall Master Xu and the others were standing not too far away with

anxious looks on their faces.

"What happened?" Poison Master Bai asked.

"Reporting to Poison Master Bai, I am not too sure either. Last night, our hall master said that he was going to the Mausoleum of Hall Masters to retrieve something, and he instructed us to wait here. But despite waiting for so long, he still hasn't returned yet," Vice Hall Master Xu said with dread.

"He still hasn't returned yet? There is no doubt about it, something must have happened to him. Let's hurry in to take a look!" Frowning, Poison Master Bai rushed into the Mausoleum of Hall Masters without any hesitation.

Poison Master Hai and Zhang Xuan followed closely behind.

Upon seeing them enter, Vice Hall Master Xu and the others hesitated for a moment before clenching their jaws and following them in as well.

According to the rules, the Mausoleum of Hall Masters could only be accessed by the incumbent hall master of the branch. Despite being esteemed elders, they were unqualified to enter the premises. However, in the face of such a major crisis, they could only forgo conventions for the time being.

Upon entering, the elders noted that the entire mountain slope was filled with towering and majestic tombs, and the hall masters of each generation were buried in each of them. Inscribed on the tombstones in front of the tombs were the outstanding contributions they had made to the Poison Hall.

Not too long later, they caught up with Poison Master Bai, Poison Master Hai, and 'Sun Qiang'. At this point, they had already come to a halt. Standing right before a huge depression, the trio had an awful complexion on their faces.

Following the gazes of the trio, Vice Hall Master Xu's eyes narrowed in astonishment as his face turned ghastly pale. "Hall

Master..."

At the very center of the depression lay Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan, his body crimson with fresh blood.

Quickly flying over to help the Ruo Qingyuan up, Vice Hall Master Xu realized that the other party had already stopped breathing. Judging from the other party's injuries, it seemed like he had been killed with a single palm strike. In fact, it seemed like the huge depression in the ground had been caused by the same palm strike.

"Our hall master... is dead?"

The faces of the many elders paled in horror.

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# Chapter 1011: Earthleaf King

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At this very moment, Ruo Qingyuan's heart had already stopped. His already wounded body was withered, creating the impression that his skin was just clinging off his bones. His eyes were bulging from their sockets, as if he had witnessed something horrifying. His right fist was tightly clenched around a bottle of poison, but it seemed like he hadn't had a chance to use it before he was killed.

"Is that it?"

Gazing at the scene from above, Poison Master Bai seemed to have noticed something from examining the corpse, so he turned to Poison Master Hai to seek his opinion on the matter.

"Yes, it seems so..." The latter nodded his head grimly.

"Exactly what I thought!" Poison Master Bai narrowed his eyes, and with a tone that felt as sharp as a knife, dripping with bone-chilling killing intent, he spat, "The Otherworldly Demonic Tribe..."

Upon hearing those words, Zhang Xuan frowned. "You are saying that... Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan was killed by the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe?"

While the reputation of poison masters wasn't good, they hadn't sided with the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe entirely back during the war, and they hadn't been in contact with them ever since. Otherwise, no matter how deep the Poison Hall had hidden, the Master Teacher Pavilion would surely have found and eradicated them completely.

Considering that they hadn't been in contact, it was bizarre that an Otherworldly Demon would suddenly appear here and even kill a hall master. What was going on?

Furthermore, hearing the other party's tone, it seemed as if they had already confirmed the matter.



Poison Master Bai nodded as he explained, "Hall Master Ruo's corpse is withered; this shows that his blood essence has been sapped dry. That is an ability that only the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe possesses."

"His blood essence was sapped dry?" Activating his Eye of Insight, he turned his gaze toward Hall Master Ruo's corpse once more to examine it, and his complexion turned incredibly awful.

Just as the other party had said, the hall master's blood essence had indeed been devoured by something. It was extremely horrifying.

Blood essence was the foundation of a human's vitality. For it to have been forcefully sapped dry, the excruciating pain that Hall Master Ruo had suffered in the process was unimaginable. This was an extremely vicious method of murdering another!

"This is the offensive means of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe?" Zhang Xuan was astonished.

While he had faced quite a number of Otherworldly Demons to date, more often than not, he had been able to kill his opponent before the other party had been able to make a move against him. As such, he didn't really have much of an understanding regarding the callous means utilized by the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. However, in the moment that he saw the corpse of Hall Master Ruo, he finally understood why the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was so deeply feared by all of the races, including the humans.

To sap all of a person's blood essence was no different from eradicating one's existence. No proficiency in the Way of Medicine could bring back a man who had lost his blood essence.

A thought flashed across Poison Master Bai's mind, and he exclaimed in astonishment, "The Otherworldly Demons must be here to snatch the booklet!"

For an Otherworldly Demon to have struck the moment Ruo

Qingyuan entered the Mausoleum of Hall Masters to retrieve the booklet... it couldn't possibly have been a coincidence.

Hearing Poison Master Bai's analysis, Poison Master Hai nodded grimly in agreement as a sharp glint flashed across his eyes. "Considering that we heard Ruo Qingyuan's voice not too long ago, it is apparent that it hasn't been long since he was killed. Most likely, the murderer should still be in the vicinity. If we give chase right now, we might still be able to catch up with that scoundrel."

Right after saying those words, Poison Master Hai immediately scanned his surroundings with an intent gaze, seemingly trying to make out the location of the fleeing Otherworldly Demon. A moment later, he shook his head helplessly.

The Otherworldly Demon might have fled hurriedly right after killing Hall Master Ruo in a single strike, but he had also made sure to erase his trail so that no one would be able to follow him easily. Considering how big the island was and how powerful the Otherworldly Demon seemed to be, it would be impossible for them to catch up with the other party if they were to get the direction wrong at first.

"Let me take a look!" Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes as he began scanning the surroundings.

They had rushed over at top speed right after hearing the commotion, but typically speaking, there shouldn't have been time for the Otherworldly Demon to get too far away.

As long as the Otherworldly Demon hadn't left the island yet, it would be possible to catch up with and subdue the other party with the strength that Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai's possessed, allowing them to exact vengeance for Hall Master Ruo.

Studying the depression carefully with the Eye of Insight, it didn't take long for a faint trail to appear in Zhang Xuan's sight.

"The Otherworldly Demon went that way!" Zhang Xuan pointed.

"That way?"

Upon seeing the direction that Zhang Xuan was pointing at, Poison Master Bai and the others couldn't help but be perplexed.

The direction pointed was the very direction they had come from.

On their way to the Mausoleum of Hall Masters, they hadn't seen anyone escaping. Furthermore, considering that they were in the base of the Poison Hall, shouldn't the assassin have been trying everything in his means to escape at this very moment? To be heading to the heart of their base at this very moment instead of fleeing, wasn't the other party courting death?

It was not that they were unwilling to trust this 'Sun Qiang' person, but without the will of the founder, the other party was a mere Nascent Saint cultivator. It was indeed a little difficult to believe that he was capable of tracking down the trail of a Saint 4-dan expert when even a Saint 5-dan expert like Poison Master Hai was helpless before the matter.

"Follow me!"

The booklet could very well disappear forever should they allow the murderer to escape with it. Knowing that there was no time for an explanation, he hurriedly beckoned the others to follow him before flying in the direction of the trail.

Seeing how affirmative the other party was, Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai decided to toss aside their doubts for the moment and hurriedly pursued 'Sun Qiang'.

Not too long after leaving the Mausoleum of Hall Masters, Zhang Xuan suddenly came to a halt. He scanned his surroundings carefully, and a deep frown emerged on his forehead.

The Otherworldly Demon was extremely cunning. There had still been a trail a moment ago, but it had abruptly disappeared at this point. Even through his Eye of Insight, there was no sign of the

other party anywhere.

However, this sufficed to show that the Otherworldly Demon didn't have any time to get away yet and could very well be hiding in the area.

"Where is he?"

The surroundings were mainly flat. There were a couple of low-lying buildings and miscellaneous plants scattered around the area, but from the sky, it was possible to catch a bird's eye view of everything easily. If the other party was truly in the area, there was nowhere he could hide himself.

"Unless..." Zhang Xuan lowered his head as his eyes narrowed.

Since the other party was neither in the sky nor on the ground, that only left a single possibility... the other party was underground!

However, there was not a hole to be found on the ground. There didn't seem to be any way they could get into the ground to pursue the other party.

Noticing Zhang Xuan directing a doubtful gaze on the ground, Poison Master Bai walked up to him and asked, "What? Are you suspecting that the Otherworldly Demon is hiding underground?"

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded. "The trail ends right here. Other than underground, I cannot think of anywhere else."

"This isn't a difficult problem to resolve. To know whether the other party is underground or not, we just have to check it a little," Poison Master Bai replied.

In the next moment, a brilliant glow emanated from his Yuanshen acupoint as a figure that shared the same facial features as Poison Master Bai slipped out from it.

Separation of the Primordial Spirit from the physical body!

With a light movement, Poison Master Bai's Primordial Spirit

slipped into the ground and disappeared from sight.

Primordial Spirits were similar to souls in many ways. Unlike physical bodies, they were capable of warping their form freely, allowing them to pass through most impediments easily. As tough as the ground was, there were still small pores in between that allowed a Primordial Spirit to slip in easily.

Hong long!

Not too long after Poison Master Bai's Primordial Spirit descended into the ground, the crowd suddenly felt the earth beneath their feet shaking violently. Following which, a figure abruptly burst out with a resounding explosion.

"Where do you think you are escaping to?"

As soon as that figure appeared, Poison Master Hai responded swiftly and charged up with a deafening bellow. Gathering immense strength in his hands, he formed a massive palm, which tore down the buildings and trees in the surroundings before it could even strike the ground.

At this moment, Poison Master Hai was already a Saint 5-dan expert. Even the most casual of actions from him wielded the strength to move mountains and split oceans, making it hard for anyone to stand against him.

Hu!

Upon seeing the devastating attack launched by Poison Master Hai, the figure knew that he would surely die if he were to be struck by the attack. Thus, he curled himself into a bundle in the sky and descended like a streak of lightning back to the ground.

The speed he was moving at was even faster than when he had leaped out from the ground earlier.

Hula!

Falling toward the ground at such unbelievable speed, everyone

thought that the figure would surely incur severe injuries upon impact. Yet, contrary to all expectations, the figure disappeared into the ground as if a water droplet falling into a pile of sand, disappearing within the soil in the blink of an eye.

"This is... the Art of Earth Traversing!" Poison Master Hai exclaimed in shock.

His strike had created a huge hole in the ground, but the enemy was nowhere to be seen. Alarmed, his eyes narrowed warily.

"Art of Earth Traversing?" Zhang Xuan asked doubtfully, having never heard of the name before.

"It is an ability that runs through a unique bloodline that grants one's body the ability to travel freely underground just like a Primordial Spirit, never hindered by anything in one's path." After swiftly explaining the matter to Zhang Xuan, Poison Master Hall bellowed loudly, "Bai Ting, you chase him beneath. I will wait above and strike him as soon as he surfaces. No matter what, we can't allow that fellow to escape!"

"Alright!" Beneath the ground, Poison Master Bai's voice sounded.

Moving in the form of his Primordial Spirit, he could travel freely through the pores of the earth. With two Saint 5-dan experts collaborating with one another, one working on the surface and the other one beneath the ground, it would be impossible for the enemy to escape even if he possessed the ability to traverse through earth freely!

Boom boom boom!

A series of intense tremors struck the area, and various buildings in the area fell easily as if they were simply piles of hay. Examining the situation from the sky, Zhang Xuan and the others couldn't help but feel as if there were two mighty dragons clashing with one another beneath the ground, creating huge shockwaves through

the ground with each blow they traded.

Huge cracks emerged on the surface, and they swiftly crept along the surface, covering more and more ground. A turbid gush of smoke burst forth from a couple of these cracks, and the temperature in the area rose. Soon, the smoke dissipated to reveal flurrying lava within the cracks.

Poison Master Bai had barely made the breakthrough to Saint 5-dan just a moment ago, so he was still unable to control his strength perfectly. It was one thing to battle in the sky, but to clash beneath the ground... This was indubitably bringing a catastrophe upon the Poison Hall!

If the battle between Zhang Xuan's physical body and Hall Master Ruo had resulted in the loss of precious historical architecture of the Poison Hall, the battle between Poison Master Bai and the Otherworldly Demon would be no different from bringing utter ruination upon the Poison Hall!

The trembling earth felt as if a massive beast had come to life, reducing innumerable exquisitely designed buildings to rubble.

Sou!

After a long period of time, a figure finally darted out of the earth once more. This time, his movement wasn't as nimble as before. As soon as he appeared, he spurted a mouthful of blood, and he crashed heavily to the ground.

Poison Master Hai, who had been waiting patiently outside for the prey to be driven over to his side, swiftly spread open his fingers and grabbed forward. Numerous surges of zhenqi crossed with one another to form a firm cage around the figure, sealing the other party's movements.

"As expected, it really is an Otherworldly Demon!" At this point, Zhang Xuan finally got a clear look at the other party's appearance, and a deep frown surfaced on his forehead.

The other party bore some semblance to the Goldenleaf King and the other Otherworldly Demon Kings he had killed before. On top of that, the other party emanated a sharp aura, which clearly revealed his Saint 4-dan cultivation.

The Violetleaf King discreetly sent a telepathic message to Zhang Xuan discreetly from the Myriad Anthive Nest. "Young Master, that person is the Earthleaf King! He is also one of the Ten Great Kings of our Qingtian Lineage. His fighting prowess might be beneath mine, but he possesses the ability of earth traversing, allowing him to easily escape from any crises. He is our most capable scout!"

The Violetleaf King was a Saint 4-dan expert, so as long as Zhang Xuan permitted him to, the other party could easily extend his Spiritual Perception beyond the Myriad Anthive Nest to detect what was happening in the area.

Zhang Xuan couldn't help but ask, "Earthleaf King? Another one of the Ten Great Kings? Why would he be here?"

He seemed to be meeting the Ten Great Kings of the Qingtian Lineage everywhere he went. So far, he had already encountered half of them, and he had successfully killed or forced them to submit to him thus far.

Honestly speaking, had Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai not made a breakthrough to Saint 5-dan, there was no way they would have been able to capture the other party, considering the other party's ability to travel freely underground.

After a moment of contemplation, the Violetleaf King revealed his deduction. "My guess is that the Qingtian Emperor didn't feel secure entrusting the vital mission of acquiring the map to me and the Waterleaf King, so just to be safe, he secretly sent the Earthleaf King over to carry out the mission should the both of us fail. Most likely, the fellow must have followed you and Elder Xu here!"

The Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was unaware of the location of



the Poison Hall, or else he and the Waterleaf King wouldn't have resorted to ordering the city lord to search for the Sepulture Flower all around the city to lure an elder of the Poison Hall to them.

Thus, for the Earthleaf King to suddenly appear in the Poison Hall, chances were that he had been trailing them all along.

Zhang Xuan shook his head. "That's not necessarily so. I think that it is more likely that he might have gotten into the Poison Hall by following Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai."

Knowing that the Otherworldly Demons were after the map as well, Zhang Xuan had made sure to proceed very carefully when he left Jingyuan City. If there had been someone following him, he would have surely noticed it.

On the other hand, Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai probably didn't think that there would be anyone following them, thus creating an opening for the Earthleaf King to exploit.

Had it been anyone else, the powerful formation of the Poison Hall would have surely kept them at bay. However, considering that it was the Earthleaf King who was skilled in the Art of Earth Traversing they were talking about, the other party just might have been able to burrow his way through the formation with relative ease.

After making his way into the Poison Hall, the Earthleaf King had been camping underground, not daring to make a reckless move in fear of the retaliation of the Poison Hall. It was only when he heard that Hall Master Ruo was going to acquire the booklet alone that he secretly followed the other party, striking the moment that the other party took out the booklet.

Based on what he had planned earlier, he had thought that he would surely be able to get away easily with his ability to traverse through earth. Yet, who could have thought that Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai would suddenly make breakthroughs

overnight, thus granting them the strength to corner him, rendering him incapable of escaping.

# Chapter 1012: Hu Yunsheng's Horror

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It might sound complicated, but it wasn't too difficult to deduce the series of events after learning of the other party's identity.

While Zhang Xuan was in the midst of conversing with the Violetleaf King, Poison Master Bai's Primordial Spirit returned to his body before walking up to the Earthleaf King. With a tap of his finger, a unique poison seeped into the other party's body.

After which, with a wintry face that was devoid of the slightest warmth, he bellowed, "Who sent you here?"

"This is bad!"

Seeing Poison Master Bai forcefully interrogating the Earthleaf King, Zhang Xuan's face immediately warped in horror, and he hurriedly rushed forward to stop the other party. However, it was already too late. The trapped Earthleaf King forcefully clamped his jaws together, and his face immediately turned extremely red.

"Hahaha, you have fallen for our ploy..." Right after saying those words, the Earthleaf King's head fell powerlessly to the side. Fresh blood spurted from his every orifice as his breathing came to a halt.

Just like the Goldenleaf King and the Greenleaf King, the Earthleaf King also had a pill that contained lethal poison in his mouth. So that they wouldn't find themselves in a position where they had no choice but to spill the secrets of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, they would bite down on the pill and commit suicide were they to be captured.

Right after learning of the assailant's identity, Zhang Xuan had busied himself trying to deduce how the other party had managed to sneak into the Poison Hall, hoping to make sense of the story. However, he didn't think that Bai Ting would use poison against the other party while his attention was away, and that became the

final push that forced the Earthleaf King to commit suicide. By the time he realized, it was already too late to intervene.

The poison was extremely potent, and it brought about near immediate death to the Otherworldly Demons. Even with Zhang Xuan's 7-star proficiency in the Way of Medicine, there was no way he could bring the already deceased Earthleaf King back to life.

"He said that we have fallen for his ploy?" Poison Master Bai scoffed coldly, thinking nothing of the other party's words.

It mattered not to him whether the other party had died here or not as long as the booklet he needed to procure for his mission was still around.

Walking up, he took the other party's storage ring and searched its interior, but soon, his complexion became incredibly awful.

Noticing Poison Master Bai's expression, Poison Master Hai asked worriedly, "What's wrong?"

"The booklet isn't in here!" Poison Master exclaimed anxiously.

"It isn't in there?" Poison Master Hai was astonished.

It was just a moment ago that the Otherworldly Demon had killed Hall Master Ruo and stolen the map, and the both of them had swiftly collaborated with one another to capture him shortly after. Given the short span of time between both events, there shouldn't have been any chance for the booklet to have left the other party's possession.

"Damn it, we have really fallen for their ploy! This fellow's goal was to lure us away!" Clenching his teeth tightly together, regret could be seen in the depths of Poison Master Bai's eyes.

Poison Master Hai and the others weren't fools either. They immediately realized what was going on after hearing those words.

It seemed like the one in charge of stealing the booklet was someone else. This fellow was probably intending on giving

himself away from the very start even if Zhang Xuan hadn't found his trail so as to draw all attention to him, thus creating an opportunity for his companion to escape.

It had been ten minutes since the incident occurred, and if it was exactly as Poison Master Bai thought, the Earthleaf King's companion should have already gotten away from the Poison Hall by now. Once he entered the surrounding sea, it would be impossible to track him down anymore.

Naturally, it didn't take long for Zhang Xuan to come to the same conclusion as well. Just as his complexion turned awful, the Violetleaf King suddenly exclaimed with a trembling voice, "The culprit is probably... the Skyleaf King!"

"Skyleaf King?"

"Yes, he is the strongest of the Ten Great Kings of the Qingtian Lineage, as well as the one who boasts of the most brilliant mind of us all! His cultivation has reached Saint 5-dan Leaving Aperture realm primary stage. He is the only one of us all who possesses the ability to enter and flee discreetly from the Poison Hall," the Violetleaf King explained.

"Leaving Aperture realm primary stage?" Zhang Xuan's face turned livid.

If that truly was the case, there was a really good chance that their deduction was true!

An expert of the Leaving Aperture realm could easily hide his physical body outside the island and sneak in with only his Primordial Spirit. Right after obtaining the map, the other party could swiftly flee without anyone noticing. Furthermore, in the form of a Primordial Spirit, the other party could move at an incredible speed, such that even a Saint 4-dan aerial saint beast would find it hard to catch up.

Not expecting for there to be such an expert among the Ten Great

Kings of the Qingtian Lineage, Zhang Xuan hadn't thought of the possibility that his Eye of Insight might currently be too weak to uncover the enemy's trail. This had resulted in an opening for the enemy to exploit.

It seemed he would have to be more careful in the future.

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan asked, "Who else is among the Ten Great Kings, and how powerful are they?"

Even though he had already taken down half of the Ten Great Kings, he still didn't have a concrete idea of who or how powerful they were so far. It sure was stifling for him to still know next to nothing about the opponents he was facing.

Of course, if the Qingtian Emperor were to learn of Zhang Xuan's current thoughts, he might just very well spurt a mouthful of blood on the spot.

Of his ten most capable subordinates, four of them had been killed through a scheme of some kind and one had ended up submitting to the enemy... and yet, the culprit behind all of it actually knew nothing about them at all.

If the culprit could already do this much despite knowing nothing about them, just what kind of calamity would befall them once the other party knew everything about them?

"The Goldenleaf, Greenleaf, Waterleaf, and Earthleaf are already dead. Other than me, the Skyleaf, Jadeleaf, Windleaf, Stoneleaf, and Fireleaf are still remaining. Of them, the Skyleaf King is the strongest of us all, and he is the head of the Ten Great Kings as well. The Jadeleaf King holds the title of being the second strongest of us all, possessing a cultivation of Half-Leaving Aperture realm. Following on are the Windleaf King, Stoneleaf King, and Fireleaf King. Each of them wields incredible might that is far beyond the rest of us. As such, they are known as the Upper Five Kings whereas the rest of us are known as the Lower Five Kings." Without any hesitation, the Violetleaf King spilled

everything he knew about the Ten Great Kings.

After hearing the news, Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

Just dealing with the Lower Five Kings had already exposed him to grave danger on multiple occasions, but who could have thought that there would still be an Upper Five Kings above them. From the looks of it, they were determined to obtain the item in the ancient domain. Considering that they had even successfully obtained the map, there was a good chance that the humans would be placed in grave danger once the ancient domain opened once more.

Forget it, I will just have to deal with whatever comes my way!

There was no way Zhang Xuan could have predicted such a twist in the situation. At this point, there was nothing he could do anymore. The Skyleaf King had more than sufficient time to make his escape, making it nigh impossible for them to locate the other party. Taking a step back, even if they were able to find the Skyleaf King by some stroke of luck, there was no way that Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai, who had just made a breakthrough and hadn't had the opportunity to reinforce their cultivation yet, could be a match for the other party.

Less had to be said about Zhang Xuan himself.

With the Violetleaf King and the Otherworldly Demon puppets, he might still be able to subdue a Saint 4-dan expert. But against a Saint 5-dan expert... the wisest decision he could possibly make in such a situation was to flee as far as he could.

Leaving Aperture realm experts were capable of fighting with their Primordial Spirits, which made them very difficult opponents. Not only were Primordial Spirits capable of flitting through space at incredible speeds, they also wielded immense strength that made it impossible for normal cultivators to match them. Without reaching Saint 5-dan himself, it was impossible for any cultivator to face an expert of that caliber!

Master teachers prided themselves on their ability to match opponents stronger than them due to their discerning eyes, but the Leaving Aperture realm was too huge of a rift to bridge. The differences between a physical body and a Primordial Spirit were reminiscent of that between a mortal and a deity, a gap that could never be bridged.

Take Zhang Xuan's current situation for example, despite having yet to reach Saint realm, he was able to defeat Saint 2-dan Spiritual Perception realm experts, cultivators of two whole cultivation realms higher than him.

The capability to rival opponents stronger than himself wasn't too uncommon for those beneath Saint 5-dan, albeit it was often not as exaggerated as in Zhang Xuan's case. However, even if a genius of such caliber were to reach Primordial Spirit realm pinnacle, it was unlikely that he would be able to match an ordinary Leaving Aperture realm primary stage cultivator.

Not to mention, a Leaving Aperture realm expert could flee with their Primordial Spirit even if they were no match for their opponent. Those whose cultivation had yet to reach Saint 5-dan had no way of catching up at all. Putting everything aside, just the ability to travel through the ground, those who hadn't reached Leaving Aperture realm, with the exception of those who possessed unique bloodlines like the Earthleaf King, were incapable of doing such a thing.

On top of that, Primordial Spirits need not breathe. This meant that they could enter places with harsh conditions without fear, such as venturing into the depths of the ocean, a feat that those bound by their bodies would never be able to achieve.

While Zhang Xuan was conversing with the Violetleaf King, Poison Master Bai turned a grim look toward him and said, "The Otherworldly Demonic Tribe has stolen the booklet and killed Hall Master Ruo on top of that. This matter must be reported to the headquarters immediately. Poison Master Sun, the both of us will



be taking our leave first!"

Clearly, they also knew that it was unlikely that they would be unable to find the other party. It would only be a waste of time if they continued searching the area. Thus, they felt that it would be much better for them to send the founder, who was in a dangerous position at the moment, back to the headquarters first.

"Alright!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

The hall master of the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall had been killed; such a huge organization couldn't go without a head for too long. Thus, the crowd unanimously voted Vice Hal Master Xu as the new hall master.

Zhang Xuan handed the Sepulture Flower over the Vice Hall Master Xu and offered him guidance on the concoction of grade-7 poisons so that the latter could make a breakthrough to become a 7-star poison master. After all was done, he heaved a sigh of relief.

With his aim at the Poison Hall accomplished, there was no longer any need for him to remain in the area. Thus, he stood up and bade everyone farewell before leaving with Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai.

The aerial saint beast that Poison Master Bai travelled on was extremely swift. In less than a day, Zhang Xuan had already returned to Jingyuan City.

After alighting from the saint beast, Zhang Xuan made the two poison masters promise him once more that they would put everything they had into protecting Wei Ruyan before he was willing to let them leave.

Students would eventually leave their teachers; Wei Ruyan was no exception to the rule.

Even the most ferocious of eagles would never be able to mature if it were to live under the protection of another its entire life, deprived of the opportunity to fly independently in the azure sky.

It was the same for students.

This was precisely the reason Zhang Xuan had allowed his students to leave him one after another despite his reluctance.

First Zhao Ya and Lu Chong, followed by Yuan Tao, and now, it was Wei Ruyan's turn.

Zheng Yang would also likely head to the Combat Master Hall eventually, which meant that five out of his seven direct disciples had already left him.

Sighing deeply, Zhang Xuan made his way back into Inkcloud Quarter once more.

It didn't take him long before he met Hu Yunsheng, and the latter informed him that the Master Teacher Pavilion and Hongyuan royal family had already dispatched some men the previous day to seal the City Lord Manor for investigation purposes.

It turned out that the city lord's only son was held hostage by the Otherworldly Demons, leaving the city lord no choice but to obey their commands.

Nevertheless, it was unpardonable for a human to serve an Otherworldly Demon to deal with his own kind regardless of the reason. As such, the guards had apprehended the city lord, and they were currently in the midst of transporting him back to the capital, where he would be judged by Yu Shenqing personally.

Upon hearing this news, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but sigh again.

A human really shouldn't commit evil, no matter how small a sin it was. Often, it was a single wrong step that eventually led to an endless downward spiral into the abyss.

After settling the Heaven's Path zhenqi lying dormant in Hu Yunsheng's body, Zhang Xuan stood up and bade farewell. Upon finding a rural area, he summoned the Byzantium Helios Beast from the Anthive Nest and adeptly leaped onto its back. With a

light stomp of his feet, the Byzantium Helios Beast soared into the sky, making its way straight toward the Master Teacher Academy was.

"Byzantium Helios Beast... A Saint realm Byzantium Helios Beast?" Watching as Zhang Xuan depart from the distance, Hu Yunsheng's body abruptly froze. In that moment, a multitude of information flashed through his mind, nearly exploding it.

Having never seen his boss acting with such indecorum before, Zhu Xiao asked doubtfully, "Boss, what's wrong?"

While Byzantium Helios Beasts were indeed rarely seen in the world, there were still a couple of them in Hongyuan Empire.

Noticing Zhu Xiao's doubts, Hu Yunsheng replied with a bitter smile, "It's true that a Byzantium Helios Beast is an extremely rare tamed beast, but... there is only one Saint realm Byzantium Helios Beast in the whole of Hongyuan Empire!"

"Only one?" Zhu Xiao was taken aback. "Boss, could it be that you have already deduced Elder Sun's real identity?"

"If my guess isn't wrong, the current form he is assuming is a disguise. His real name is... Zhang Xuan!" Hu Yunsheng replied.

"Zhang Xuan?" Zhu Xiao's body stiffened as his face turned completely pale. "You are talking about the newly-appointed principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, Principal Zhang?"

As an intelligence agency, Inkcloud Quarter had a lot of information regarding Zhang Xuan. Even Zhu Xiao had heard of the legends of that Principal Zhang and viewed the latter as a role model whom he would strive towards.

"Un, that's him." Hu Yunsheng nodded. "I just recalled that Principal Zhang has a butler called Sun Qiang. Furthermore, for the Master Teacher Pavilion and the royal family to come so swiftly to deal with the city lord... According to internal news, it

seems like the order to do so has come directly from Principal Zhang. Putting together all of this, I would really have to be a fool to still not figure out the other party's identity!"

"This..." At this point, Zhu Xiao finally realized as well.

It truly felt like a dream. To think that Principal Zhang would personally come to Jingyuan City and even visit their Inkcloud Quarter...

"Wait a moment, Boss. If I recall correctly, you attempted to kill the other party to steal his wealth back then..."

Recalling that matter, Zhu Xiao hurriedly turned his gaze toward Hu Yunsheng, only to see the latter's face turning completely pale as veins popped out by his temples. "If you dare speak of this matter to another soul, I will definitely hunt you down and kill you!"

Thinking about the matter again, Hu Yunsheng couldn't help but feel fearful.

Who would have thought that he would actually end up trying to rob the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy? Wasn't this no different from courting death? It was fortunate that the other party was a master teacher, a reasonable person. Otherwise, he might very well have become a corpse already.

# Chapter 1013: Luo Ruoxin's Request

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A brilliant sun hung brightly above, and a warm breeze caressed the world.

After flying for roughly ten days on the Byzantium Helios Beast, the massive outline of Hongyuan City gradually came into view.

Within the ten days, Zhang Xuan had managed to internalized all of the knowledge he had learned from the Poison Hall and fused it with his current fighting style. At the same time, he had also cultivated the Saint Ascension Decipher to its very peak, just a step away from breaking through to the Saint realm.

However, it was a pity that the Seven-colored Earth Jade Essence was nowhere to be found at the moment, or else he would have long made a breakthrough.

I should get Sun Qiang to look into the matter...

In terms of logistical efficiency and intelligence gathering, he was nowhere on par with Sun Qiang. Thus, it was reassuring to leave it in the hands of the latter.

As long as he could find the Seven-colored Earth Jade Essence, he would be able to push for a perfect breakthrough to Saint realm, thus inducing a huge leap in his fighting prowess once more.

By then, regardless of the dangers that lurked in the ancient domain, he would surely be able to deal with them easily.

Not too long later, right after the Byzantium Helios Beast landed in his manor, Sun Qiang rushed up to Zhang Xuan and reported, "Young Master, Young Master Zheng Yang has been taken away..."

"Taken away? By whom?" Zhang Xuan asked with a frown.

"It's Combat Master Liao from the Combat Master Hall. He says that he will take Young Master Zheng Yang to participate in the Progeny of Combat Selection, or else this matter might end up

being pushed a year back," Sun Qiang replied.

"Progeny of Combat Selection?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

"Yes. This is the letter that Young Master Zheng Yang left for you..." After saying those words, Sun Qiang passed a letter over.

With a complicated look on his face, Zhang Xuan opened the envelope and saw a note filled with words within.

It didn't take long for him read through the entire note, and at the end of which, he couldn't help but sigh deeply.

Combat Master Liao had reported the matter concerning Zheng Yang to the headquarters, and the headquarters had instructed him to bring Zheng Yang to them at any cost to participate in the Progeny of Combat Selection. If Zheng Yang cleared the selection, he could very well inherit the heritage of the Combat God and become the next head of the Combat Master Hall!

The founder of the Combat Master Hall had been a direct disciple of Kong shi, and out of respect for the overwhelming strength he possessed, those of the Master Teacher Continent had given him a nickname—Combat God!

As long as one cleared the Progeny of Combat Selection, one would be qualified to inherit his heritage and become one of the strongest experts of the Master Teacher Pavilion or even the entire Master Teacher Continent.

It looks like he has found his own path...

To have sent two of his students away within just a short period of ten days, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but feel a little lonely within. Nevertheless, he still felt gladdened for them.

After all, they couldn't possibly remain his students for their entire lives. They would eventually have to find their paths to tread on.

If Zheng Yang could become the Combat God of this generation,

the head of the Combat Master Hall... at the very least, this would mean that his teachings hadn't been in vain. As Zheng Yang's teacher, Zhang Xuan would be more than delighted to see that.

Forget it. After I am done dealing with the matters concerning the ancient domain, I should bring the members of the Xuanxuan Faction to Qingyuan Conferred Empire's Combat Master Hall for the both to interact and learn from one another. I should be able to receive updates about Zheng Yang there. With a smile, Zhang Xuan tossed aside the loneliness he felt within.

He had already promised Combat Master Liao and the others that he would take the members of the Xuanxuan Faction for a visit to the Qingyuan Empire Combat Master Hall once they settled the affairs regarding the ancient domain at Firesource City. While the Qingyuan Empire Combat Master Hall was only a branch, it was still possible to gather some news regarding Zheng Yang from there.

"Is there anything else other than that?"

"Young Master, the head of the Formation Master School and Blacksmith School took 10,000 students from their respective schools each to Firesource City for a mission. They set forth roughly five days ago!" Sun Qiang reported.

"Firesource City? Mission?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

It wasn't anything much for the other school heads to head to Firesource City in advance, but... due to the great implications tied in with the ancient domain, there was a need to keep the matter confidential. To mobilize twenty thousand students from the Master Teacher Academy there despite so... could it be that there had been some kind of compelling situation in Firesource City that warranted aid?

Due the grave importance of the matter, even Sun Qiang wasn't qualified to learn more about the matter. In fact, it was likely that even the students who had set forth to Firesource City were

unaware of what they were going to do either.

"Is there anything else?" Zhang Xuan continued asking.

"Also... Luo Ruoxin has visited here twice in your absence. It seems like she has an important matter to ask of you," Sun Qiang reported with a peculiar look on his face.

Having followed the young master from the start of their journey at Tianxuan Kingdom, they had encountered plenty of beautiful ladies, each possessing their own unique charm. Yet, not once had the young master granted them any preferential treatment or behaved differently around them, except for this Luo shi!

Speaking of which, there was also something bizarre about Luo shi as well. No cultivator was uninterested in his young master's teachings, but this Luo shi was really the first. The way she acted around the young master showed that she only regarded the latter as another ordinary cultivator.

This in itself was truly perplexing.

"She came over to find me?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

Luo Ruoxin was the only woman who had ever touched his heart, be it in his previous life or his current one. There had been many problems cropping up one after another, and he had been busy trying to deal with them, resulting in the both of them not meeting one another for a considerable period of time, but his heart still couldn't help but thump in anticipation upon hearing her name.

This was completely different from how he felt around Yu Fei-er and the others.

"Yes. As she is young master's good friend, I dared not probe further into it." Sun Qiang nodded.

"It's fine. I will pay her a visit to ask her about it later on," Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

After confirming that there was nothing else to tend to, Zhang



Xuan got up and made his way right toward the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy. Not too long later, he landed at Luo Ruoxin's residence.

Standing before the entrance of Luo Ruoxin's residence, he quickly tidied his clothes. After which, he took out a mirror and saw a handsome face staring back at him. Nodding in satisfaction, he knocked on the door.

"Luo shi, I am Zhang Xuan!" Zhang Xuan said, transmitting his voice into the residence through his zhenqi.

The pleasant voice of a female replied, "Come in!"

Walking into the residence, Zhang Xuan saw Luo Ruoxin standing not too far away. Just like always, her presence felt calm and serene, reminiscent of a still painting. Surprisingly, there was another man standing not too far away from her—Mu Yuan.

After agreeing to meet at Firesource City back then, Mu shi had left together with Wu shi to return to Qingyuan Conferred Empire. Zhang Xuan didn't think that he would meet the other party here.

Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, Mu shi exclaimed anxiously, "Senior Uncle, you came at the perfect time. Help me talk some sense into Luo shi; she is insisting on following us to Firesource City as well!"

"You wish to go to Firesource City as well?" Taken aback, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze toward the young lady before him.

"Un." Luo Ruoxin nodded with a slight smile on her lips. "With all of the mysteries surrounding the ancient domain, as a master teacher, I should also go and check it out as well."

"But... we know next to nothing about the ancient domain! Even Wu shi won't be able to guarantee your safety," Mu shi said worriedly.

Back then, the old principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy had ventured into the ancient domain together with a team he had assembled, only to disappear from the face of the

world. On top of that, the Qingyuan Master Teacher Pavilion had no records about the interior of the ancient domain at all, so there was no saying what dangers were lurking in the depths of the ancient domain

Not to mention, they had recently received news that the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was involved with the ancient domain as well.

It could be said that this expedition into the ancient domain would likely result in great casualties. Given Luo shi's noble standing, there was no way he could take responsibility should anything happen to the other party.

While speaking, Mu shi was blinking frantically at Zhang Xuan, attempting to signal to the latter that he wanted help persuading Luo shi against it. With such obvious gesturing, he thought that his senior uncle would surely receive his signal. Yet...

"That's great, let's head there together then!" Zhang Xuan eyes gleamed in excitement.

It just so happened that he had been searching for an opportunity to spend some time with Luo shi when such a news came his way. It was as if even the heavens were on his side!

"Senior Uncle..." Mu shi's vision darkened, and he nearly fell to the ground.

To say such words after I have gestured so clearly for you to help me persuade her against it, don't you think that you are a little too shameless?

Even if you like Luo shi, at least be a little more reserved about it! To make it so obvious for everyone to see... don't you think that it is unbefitting of your standing as the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy?

"It's fine! How can a master teacher grow if they attempt to avoid every single danger that comes their way?" Zhang Xuan waved his

hands leisurely. "Besides, I will be around to protect her, so there is no way anything bad can happen!"

"..." Dark lines streaked across Mu shi's face.

You are the very reason that I am feeling very unsettled about this expedition! Look at all of those ridiculous things you have done in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy; it is as if trouble chases you wherever you go.

If only I knew that you were so unreliable, I would have never asked for your help!

Just as Mu shi was about to argue back, Luo Ruoxin waved her hands and said, "Zhang shi is right. Mu shi, there's no need to persuade me anymore; my mind is set."

"... Alright then." Seeing that there was no way he could convince the young lady before him otherwise, Mu shi shook his head helplessly.

Seeing that Mu shi had given up on the matter, Luo Ruoxin turned to Zhang Xuan and said, "Since you are back, let's set forth as soon as possible."

Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement. "Alright, let's set forth now."

There wasn't anything major in the Master Teacher Academy at the moment, and even if there was, School Head Mo and the others were more than capable of dealing with it themselves. Besides, there were only around eight days to the date on which they had agreed to meet at Firesource City. If they didn't set forth soon, it was likely that they would be unable to make it in time.

As Zhang Xuan often journeyed around, his necessities were neatly packed in his storage ring at all times, so there was no need for him to make any preparations. Mu shi swiftly called for his aerial spirit beast, and before long, the trio was on their way toward Firesource City.

Sitting in the wooden hut atop the saint beast's back, Zhang Xuan

turned to Mu shi and asked, "I heard that Zhao Bingxu and the others have brought quite a number of our students over to Firesource City. Did something happen?"

Sun Qiang might not have been qualified to learn about the details of the matter, but as one of the leaders of the expedition team, Mu shi definitely knew something about it.

"Something did happen," Mu shi said grimly. "Not too long ago, the seal leading to the ancient domain suddenly grew unstable, and it seems like it could collapse at any moment. As such, School Head Zhao lead the students over in the hope that they could stabilize the formation and buy some time until the seal finally opens once more."

"How did such a matter occur?" Zhang Xuan was bewildered.

When the ancient domain appeared two years ago, the Master Teacher Pavilion did send some men to investigate it, and there hadn't been a problem then. Why would the seal be destabilized all of a sudden?

"I am not too sure about the details either, but my guess is that the Otherworldly Demons are involved in this matter!" With a deep frown on his forehead, Mu shi hesitated for a moment before continuing. "According to reports from the local master teachers, there have been Otherworldly Demons sighted in the vicinity of the seal. Eyewitnesses claimed that they were carrying some kind of artifact with them, and they loitered around the area for a brief moment before hurriedly leaving. Shortly after they left, the seal suddenly destabilized."

"Artifact? Could it be a booklet?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

The booklet that the Skyleaf King had stolen from the Poison Hall was said to have come from the ancient domain within the seal. For Otherworldly Demons to appear around the seal and destabilize it at this moment, could both matters possibly be related to one another?

The more Zhang Xuan thought about it, the more convinced he was of the matter.

As a Saint 5-dan expert, the Skyleaf King was capable of flying at speeds far greater than he could. While it had taken Zhang Xuan roughly ten days to travel from Jingyuan City to Hongyuan City, it was likely that the Skyleaf King wouldn't even require five days to travel from the Poison Hall to Firesource City.

Furthermore, in his communications with the Violetleaf King, he had learned that the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe possessed exceptional spatial means. Just take the altar that Zhang Xuan had found from the Greenleaf King and Goldenleaf King for example, it was capable of transporting and receiving items remotely.

"Booklet?" Not expecting to hear such a question, Mu shi was stunned for a moment before replying with a light chuckle. "That is impossible. How can a booklet possibly wield the power to destabilize the seal?"

In his view, books were only meant to store and impart knowledge. An artifact that could destabilize a powerful seal, which even they were helpless before, was bound to be an incredibly powerful one.

So how could it possibly be a mere booklet?

Seeing that the other party didn't believe him, Zhang Xuan shook his head and fell silent.

At this point, that was only a hypothesis on his part. It would still require confirming after they arrived at Firesource City.

Recalling the order received from the headquarters not too long ago, Mu shi said, "Oh, right! Senior Uncle, Wu shi won't be taking charge of the expedition into the ancient domain. Instead, the Master Teacher Pavilion has appointed a 7-star pinnacle Formation Master, Han Xu, as the expedition leader. The Master Teacher Pavilion has ordered for everyone involved in the expedition to

follow his commands after entering the ancient domain, and no one is to move around recklessly so as to avoid undue trouble!"

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# Chapter 1014: Firesource City

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The expedition to the ancient domain had implications that could very well affect the entire human race, so the Qingyuan Master Teacher Pavilion took the matter very seriously. Not only did they dispatch Wu Shi, they had also engaged the help of 7-star pinnacle Formation Master Han Xu to aid the team in breaking the seal and leading them through the ancient domain.

Mu Shi knew that even though his senior uncle was a very capable man, the other party was also a very gutsy and decisive person, never hesitating to do whatever that he thought was right. Fearing that some unneeded trouble might arise due to his senior uncle's obstinate personality, he felt that he should warn the other party in advance.

"Don't worry." Zhang Xuan nodded reassuringly.

Seeing the confident smile on Zhang Xuan's face, Mu Shi wasn't too sure how he should respond. He subconsciously shot a glance at Luo Ruoxin and saw a slight smile of helplessness on the latter's face, seemingly untrusting of Zhang Xuan's words as well.

But thinking about it, it was no wonder Luo Ruoxin felt that way.

Back then, when she brought Zhang Xuan to the Saint Ascension Platform, she had warned him to remain respectful. But in the end, he had still collapsed the other party's cliff face, and if not for Kong Shi speaking up in that crucial moment, he might very well have been pummeled to death on the spot.

Sometimes, that fellow possessed astounding talent and wits, such that one couldn't help but be impressed with him. At other times, he behaved so doltishly that it was nearly adorable.

The trio began chatting casually. In the midst of their conversation, Zhang Xuan asked a few more questions about the ancient domain, and upon learning that it likely had ties with

Kong shi, he couldn't help but feel a surge of agitation.

Back at the Saint Ascension Platform, Zhang Xuan had asked Kong shi personally about the Innate Fetal Poison and confirmed that the latter had suffered from the same affliction back then as well. If this ancient domain had ties with Kong shi, perhaps he might be able to uncover something more about the Innate Fetal Poison.

Amidst the conversation of the trio, the aerial saint beast traversed swiftly through the sky. Five days later, Firesource City finally came into sight.

Looking at the city, which emanated a reddish hue beneath the radiant rays of the sun, Mu shi said, "Due to the geographical location of Firesource City, its weather is exceptionally hot. To make things worse, it is currently summer here as well. It would probably be unbearable for anyone who isn't a cultivator to live here."

"It is indeed really hot here!" Feeling the incredible heat in the surroundings, Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

The place he had visited just a few days ago, Jingyuan City, was completely filled with snow, battering passers-by with its bone-chilling frost.

"Even though the Saint Ascension Platform isn't too far away from here, there sure is a vast difference in the temperature," Zhang Xuan remarked.

The Saint Ascension Platform, which he had visited with Luo Ruoxin back then, wasn't located too far away from Firesource City, just a few hundred kilometers away. Yet, the weather there was perfectly normal, devoid of the blistering heat here.

"The Saint Ascension Platform is where Kong shi became a Celestial Saint. It is a place blessed by the heavens, so naturally, the weather there is mild. On the other hand, Firesource City has



quite a few active volcanoes around it, so it is inevitably plagued by such a hot weather," Mu shi explained.

Zhang Xuan nodded.

He had a map of Hongyuan Empire in the Library of Heaven's Path, so he was very familiar with the geography of the area.

To be named Firesource, the source of flames... It wasn't any surprise that the city would be plagued with unbearable heat.

Luo Ruoxin couldn't help but ask, "Given the unbearable heat plaguing the area, why was a city constructed here? Why do so many people still continue to live in the area?"

A place filled with many active volcanoes that could erupt at any moment, as well as the sweltering weather, why would people still live in the area?

Before Mu shi could speak, Zhang Xuan chuckled softly and replied, "As hot as the local weather is, it happens to be a suitable climate for growing plants that thrive in a torrid climate. Take the Witherleaf Grass for example, it is known for the withered look of its leaves throughout its growth, and it is able to mature even without water. A single stalk of Witherleaf Grass can easily fetch the price of a high-tier spirit stone in the market."

"It's so expensive?" Luo Ruoxin was taken aback.

A single high-tier spirit stone was more than sufficient for a normal person to live in luxury for their entire life.

For a single stalk of a medicinal herb to be worth such a price, it was no wonder so many people were willing to endure the unbearable weather and live here.

Zhang Xuan had not finished his explanation. "Not only so, there are also quite a few rare spirit beasts and saint beasts living in the area. They can fetch a high price when sold. Besides that, there are also several deposits of valuable ores in the area!"

Having read all of the books in the Master Teacher Academy, he boasted an even greater understanding of Hongyuan Empire than most master teachers who had grown up here.

"I see..." Luo Ruoxin nodded in realization.

There was bound to be a reason for a community to gather and a huge city to be constructed in the area.

Hearing the other party's introduction, Mu shi nodded in approval. "Senior Uncle sure is knowledgeable!"

While his senior uncle might be unreliable at times, the vast knowledge he possessed was truly praiseworthy. Be it information regarding culture, geography, or occupations, everything seemed to come to him at a single thought, leaving others with nothing but admiration for him.

It was due to this that the school heads had elected him to become the leader of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, which boasted a heritage of ten thousand years.

"It's nothing much!" Zhang Xuan smiled.

"There is still some time before the seal opens, so why don't we meet up with the others at the local Master Teacher Pavilion first?"

While the trio had been speaking, the saint beast had arrived in the airspace above the city. It gradually descended, and before long, it landed right before a towering building.

The Master Teacher Pavilion!

This city was significantly larger than Jingyuan City, and its population density was also greater than the latter. As such, the Master Teacher Pavilion had constructed a branch in the area. However, it was significantly weaker than the Master Teacher Pavilion in Hongyuan City, and the pavilion master only possessed a cultivation of Saint 1-dan intermediate stage.

Shortly after walking in, a middle-aged man walked over to

welcome them. "Paying respect to Mu shi!"

"Un. Where are Formation Master Han Xu, Wu shi, and the others? Bring us to them," Mu shi replied with a smile.

"Wu shi and the others have already left for the Swallow Embracing Mountain. They departed two days ago!" the middle-aged man hurriedly replied.

"They have already left for the Swallow Embracing Mountain?" Mu shi was taken aback. "Shouldn't there be a few more days before the seal opens? Why did they head over so early?"

"I am not too sure. They only instructed me to remain here to urge the arriving master teachers to head toward the Swallow Embracing Mountain as fast as possible!" the middle-aged man replied.

"Understood." Mu shi nodded before turning his gaze toward Zhang Xuan and Luo Ruoxin. "If even Wu shi and Formation Master Han Xu have made their way over, it is very likely that the situation with the seal might have worsened. Let's quickly head over to take a look and see how we can help them!"

"Un." Zhang Xuan and Luo Ruoxin nodded before getting atop the aerial saint beast once more.

"The seal to the ancient domain is not located within the city but in the depths of the Swallow Embracing Mountain, which is around three hundred kilometers away, on top of a massive active volcano. Due to the searing temperature, barely anyone goes there..." Seated within the room on the back of the aerial saint beast, Mu shi filled the duo in on the situation regarding the seal.

Similar to the island on which the Poison Hall was located, the seal to the ancient domain was also constructed on top of an active volcano. The massive formation that made up the seal was driven by the ravaging energy contained within the volcano. If those who didn't have a comprehensive grasp of the formation were to

attempt to break open the seal forcefully, there was a high chance that the entire mountain might collapse instead, causing the entrance to the ancient domain to disappear for good.

As such, not even the experts from the Master Teacher Pavilion dared to tamper with it. Until the seal opened of its own accord, they could only wait patiently.

It didn't take too long for Zhang Xuan and the others to cover the three-hundred-kilometer journey to the seal. In less than ten minutes, a towering mountain peak, several thousand meters high, appeared majestically before their eyes.

However, the entire mountain seemed to be absent of life; all they could really see on it were crimson stones. Even before coming close to the mountain, they could feel a searing sensation licking their skin.

Flicking his wrist, Mu shi took out two pills and passed them over. "This is the Heat Cleansing Pill. Swallowing it will grant you some immunity against fire poison 1 , sparing you from harm!"

While it wouldn't be too difficult for them to withstand such searing heat given their current cultivation, if they were to stay in such conditions for an extended period of time, the fire poison would still assault their bodies, causing them great suffering.

In order to prevent such a situation from occurring, half a month ago, the newly-appointed School Head Zhou of the Apothecary School had tasked his students with mass producing Heat Cleansing Pills for the expedition members.

The production method for the Heat Cleansing Pill wasn't too complicated; most 4-star apothecaries were able to forge it. Its ingredients were mainly cooling in nature, thus granting it exceptional effectiveness in relieving heat-related afflictions.

"Thank you!"

Possessing the Heaven's Path zhenqi, Zhang Xuan didn't even fear

lethal poison, so naturally, heat poison couldn't possibly faze him in the least. Nevertheless, this was a token of goodwill from the other party, so he couldn't bring himself to reject it. Taking the pill, he opened his mouth and swallowed it.

As soon as the pill slid down his throat, a cooling sensation permeated his entire body, leaving him feeling as if he was standing before a refreshing spring breeze. The heat around him seemed to have vanished altogether.

"This... This isn't an ordinary Heat Cleansing Pill?" Zhang Xuan's eyes widened in astonishment.

While it seemed no different from a typical Heat Cleansing Pill on the surface, the effectiveness of it was clearly far greater than an average pill.

"I forged it personally out of the various medicinal herbs I picked a while ago," Mu shi replied with a smile.

"No wonder!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

Mu shi was a 7-star master teacher, and apothecary was one of his supporting occupations. It was only natural that a grade-4 pill forged by a 7-star apothecary would have outstanding effectiveness.

The aerial saint beast advanced swiftly, and not too long later, the group arrived at the peak of the Swallow Embracing Mountain. Gazing downwards, they saw a humongous hemispherical depression beneath them. Countless students were seated cross-legged along its perimeter, infusing zhenqi relentlessly toward a specific location. Their bodies were completely drenched in sweat, but that didn't prevent more from trickling down their faces.

"They are trying to stabilize the seal," Mu shi remarked grimly.

From the looks of it, the situation with the seal was far more precarious than they had thought. Otherwise, they wouldn't have mobilized so many people simultaneously to stabilize it.

Zhang Xuan nodded. "Those are the ten thousand students from the Formation Master School."

The students of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy were dressed in a unique robe, so it wasn't too difficult to recognize them.

Hu hu hu!

Just as the students stabilizing the seal were about to reach their limits, another group of students suddenly rushed forward and swiftly placed formation flags that they had just smithed a moment ago on specific locations.

These new flags couldn't alter the structure of the seal in any way, but it could stabilize it temporarily.

They were the students from the Blacksmith School.

The students from both schools worked together with excellent teamwork, their movements both swift and fluid. It was apparent that they had repeated this set of movements multiple times over the past few days.

However, despite the combined efforts of the twenty thousand students, a powerful energy still continued to rage within the hemispherical depression below, seemingly ready to explode at any moment. Frowning, Zhang Xuan activated his Eye of Insight and took a look.

After examining it for a moment, Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up. What a complicated formation this is.

His comprehension of formations was on par with most 7-star formation masters, and yet, he still found it rather difficult to comprehend the entire structure of the formation. The sheer complexity of the formation was enough to leave him slightly light-headed.

No, it doesn't really look like it...

The more Zhang Xuan looked at it, the more perplexed he felt.

The structure he was looking at seemed like a formation, but there was something rather different about it at the same time.

Even though the seal was unstable, it was still dormant, not yet activated. As such, Zhang Xuan couldn't use the Library of Heaven's Path to assess the situation concerning the formation. With his current understanding of formations, even with the Eye of Insight, it would likely take at least several months for him to make sense of it.

If it was truly a formation, there was no doubt that it was beyond grade-7!

A formation that was beyond grade-7... No wonder no master teacher from the Qingyuan Conferred Empire Master Teacher Pavilion dared tamper with it!

It was already far beyond their scope of understanding.

Hu hu hu!

While Zhang Xuan was busy assessing the depression, Mu shi carefully controlled his aerial spirit beast to land gently on the ground.

After landing safely, before the trio could walk up to the hemispherical depression, Wu shi walked over and said, "Zhang shi, Luo shi, and Mu shi, you are here!"

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# Chapter 1015: I Can Give It a Try

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"Wu shi!"

The three of them clasped their fists to greet the other party.

"What is the current situation here?" Zhang Xuan got straight to the point.

"Half a month ago, the seal suddenly became unstable. Even so, with the forces that we have, we were still able to stabilize it easily. But two days ago, the seal suddenly began shaking intensely, threatening to collapse at any moment. Despite devoting all of our men to stabilizing the seal, we are barely hanging on at the moment. At this rate, it won't be long before the situation exceeds our control!" Wu shi glanced at the hemispherical depression with a worried frown.

"Exceeds our control?"

"Indeed." Wu shi nodded. Just as he was about to explain the matter, a deep rumbling reminiscent of thunder suddenly reverberated from the ground below. Like the cry of a behemoth or the roar of a massive dragon prowling beneath the mountain range, it seemed like a fearsome being would suddenly come to life and massacre everyone present.

"What is that?" The faces of Zhang Xuan and the others warped in astonishment.

That deep rumbling sounded like the source of a devastating calamity of some kind. Before such overwhelming force, the strength of humans felt pitifully insignificant in comparison. It felt like no amount of effort would stop the destruction from crashing down on them, devouring them all.

"We've looked into the matter, and it seems like that sound originates from the other side of the seal. There is no way for us to find out for sure what is going on within at the moment, but at this



rate, it won't be long before the entire seal collapses. Once that happens, be it the ancient domain or Firesource City, they will be reduced to ashes!" Wu shi said worriedly.

If the seal was destroyed, it could very well result in the rampaging energies within the volcano running amok, thus inducing a massive explosion. The Swallow Embracing Mountain was only three hundred kilometers away from Firesource City. At such a short distance away, there was no doubt that Firesource City would be devastated by the massive explosion as well, killing even Saint realm experts that stood in its path.

Far too much energy had gathered beneath the volcano over the years, to the point where no human could withstand it!

Hong long long!

While they were speaking, the rumbling grew louder and louder. The ground began shaking violently, and a scorching burst of air gushed up from the depths of the seal. In an instant, over half of the formation flags that had just been planted a moment ago were jolted out of the ground.

The students of the Formation Master School, who were sitting before the hemispherical depression to stabilize the seal, instantly looked weakened, and a few hundred of them were abruptly sent flying from the spot. Huge mouthfuls of blood spewed from their mouths.

A new group of students hurried forward to fill the gaps left behind by the casualties. Exerting the full extent of their cultivation, they tried their best to stabilize the seal, preventing it from collapsing.

"What an incredible force..." Upon seeing this sight, Zhang Xuan's face paled.

The might gushing out from beneath was far beyond his expectations. Even the collaboration of multiple Saint 5-dan

experts might not be able to suppress it.

Even with so many students of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy infusing their power into it, they were still barely holding on.

Before such immense power, putting aside entering the ancient domain, he would be reduced to dust by the powerful force before he could even get close to the seal!

Before, he had been thinking that no matter how dangerous the ancient domain was, as long as he were to rely on his Eye of Insight and Library of Heaven's Path to assess the situation ahead of him, he would be able to avert danger with relative ease. But from the looks of it now, his thoughts had been too naive!

Even the dangers lurking outside the ancient domain were far greater than he had expected. The slightest mistake could easily result in death!

At this moment, a loud bellow was heard throughout the area.

" Team A, guard the Gen. Team B, guard the Xun. Team C, guard the Qian. 1 As for the other teams, remain where you are and continue infusing your zhenqi into the seal!"

Following that, an elder flew into the sky and stood above everyone else. A massive compass floated before him, which he used to make calculations as he continued issuing orders here and there.

Hearing his instructions, the students beneath hurriedly moved in the teams they had formed before and carried out the instructions demanded of them. Following which, innumerable surges of zhenqi poured forth, converging at the very center of the depression. In that moment, it looked as if someone had set off a massive firework.

Under the influx of zhenqi, the fortified seal slowly calmed down. At the same time, the rumbling beneath the ground also gradually

quietened down, as if being forcefully suppressed.

After studying the situation for a moment longer, Zhang Xuan suddenly noticed something, and a deep frown arched between his brows. "Wait a moment... If the seal is fortified in such a manner, how can it be opened later?"

This method of reinforcing the formation was indeed effective in coping with the assault of the fearsome force from below, bringing safety back to the area. However... there was a major problem with this solution!

The fortification of the seal meant that it would become harder for them to open the seal and enter the ancient domain. In fact, if this continued, it might become entirely impossible to do so!

According to their previous estimates, the seal was likely to open within two to three days. However, if they were to continue reinforcing the seal in such a manner, putting aside three days, the seal might not even open within the next three years!

"Indeed, but there's nothing we can do about this situation. If we leave the seal be, the volcano will explode without a shred of doubt. Not only will the ancient domain be destroyed, the entire area, including Firesource City, will be devastated as well."

If they had a choice, they obviously wouldn't fortify the seal. But if they didn't do so, the ancient domain would be completely destroyed, making it impossible for them to enter!

Besides, considering how volatile the immense energies that had accumulated beneath the volcano were, who would dare enter even if it was possible to do so? After all, there was no one who could guarantee that the volcano wouldn't act up while they were within! Once that happened, they could very well be torn to shreds by that overwhelming force!

"Is there really no alternative solution other than to fortify the formation?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

"There is, but... it simply isn't feasible!" Wu shi shook his head.

Zhang Xuan turned his gaze to Wu shi and said, "Tell me about it."

The situation was already as bad as it could get. At this point, they had to try everything that they could.

"The seal is similar to a cover that suppresses the violent energies raging beneath the volcano. Using a metaphor, the current situation is similar to that of a balloon. Initially, when the energies attempting to burst out from beneath weren't too great, the seal was still able to keep them in through its elasticity," Wu shi explained.

"However, as more and more energies accumulated, the seal rapidly found itself coming to its limit, putting it under threat of exploding altogether! Through reinforcing the seal, we are effectively bringing the breaking point of the seal higher, allowing the seal to withstand the rampaging energies by a greater degree.

"However, no matter how much we fortify the seal, as long as the energies beneath the ground continue to accumulate, the seal will eventually reach its limit. In a sense, we are only pushing back the inevitable. Unless we resolve the root of the problem, the accumulation of energies below, there will come a day when the seal exceeds its breaking point and bursts!"

Hearing the other party's explanation, Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

The metaphor the other party used was a fitting description of the current situation they were in.

The root of the problem was still the accumulation of energies beneath the ground. The fortification of the formation only served to rein the rampaging energies in for the time being; it wasn't a long-term measure. In fact, the longer the energies were suppressed, the greater the accumulation of energies, resulting in

the eventual explosion being more devastating than it already was.

To make an analogy, it was similar to constructing a dam to prevent a flood.

The more water it kept at bay, the higher the water level would be, and the greater the pressure the dam would be put under. When the dam eventually collapsed, the flood would come crashing down with far greater momentum than it originally would.

If something similar were to happen here as well, it would spell a great calamity.

"The other solution we have thought of is to dispel the energies accumulated below directly. It would solve the root of the problem, but... before the seal is opened, there is no way we can venture below to identify the cause of the accumulation of energies and resolve the issue. On the other hand, the moment the seal is opened, the accumulated energies will surely burst forth, resulting in a catastrophic explosion." Wu shi shook his head with a bitter smile.

This was a paradox. To dispel the energies, they would have to break open the seal and enter the other side. But the moment this was done, an explosion would burst forth, annihilating everything in the area.

"This..." Zhang Xuan and Mu shi glanced at one another and shook their heads helplessly.

Wu shi was right; this was indeed an irresolvable problem. Despite knowing the dangers of fortifying the seal continuously, they had no choice but to do it.

At this point, Zhang Xuan suddenly thought of something and asked, "I heard from a master teacher stationed in the Master Teacher Pavilion that just before this problem occurred, Otherworldly Demons were spotted to be lurking around the

vicinity. Is this true?"

"That's right!" Wu shi nodded. "The Otherworldly Demons didn't remain in the area for long before fleeing. We have no idea what they did in the short period of time that they were here, but the seal suddenly grew unstable. It was still rather manageable at the start, and we were able to easily suppress it with just a couple of us in the area. However, as time ticked by, the instability worsened, and eventually... as you can see, even with the combined might of twenty thousand students, we are barely holding on!"

"They didn't remain in the area for long before fleeing?" Zhang Xuan repeated Wu shi's words contemplatively and fell into a moment of thought. A moment later, he asked, "Who was the one who spotted the Otherworldly Demons?"

"It was an ordinary 4-star master teacher. He was stationed as a sentry in the area when it happened," Wu shi replied.

"An ordinary 4-star master teacher would only possess a cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 4-dan, and yet... he noticed the movements of the Otherworldly Demons?" Zhang Xuan remarked with a tinge of bewilderment in his tone.

He had encountered many Otherworldly Demons who had passed through the seal for the ancient domain, and even the weakest of them was a Saint 1-dan.

How could an ordinary 4-star master teacher, a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan cultivator, notice them but still remain alive at this point?

Given the vast disparity in cultivation, it was inconceivable to think that the Otherworldly Demons hadn't noticed the presence of the 4-star master teacher.

"Don't worry, that master teacher is definitely trustworthy. There is no way he could have betrayed mankind," Wu shi hurriedly added.

"I am not suspecting that 4-star master teacher of colluding with the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe..." Zhang Xuan shook his head. Halfway through his words, the ground suddenly began to rumble once more.

"Initially, the energies would only act up once every four to six hours. However, the intervals between each surge has been decreasing swiftly, and at this point, it is less than ten minutes," Wu shi said.

Two days ago, due to the lower frequency of the rampaging energies acting up, their forces were still able handle it with relative ease. However, with an assault coming once every ten minutes, everyone was already on the brink of collapse!

"My students won't be able to hold on for too long at this rate," Zhang Xuan said with a livid face.

Twenty thousand of his students were currently standing atop the Swallow Embracing Mountain, and a significant proportion of them were from the Xuanxuan Faction as well. An assault once every few hours was still within their means, but one that occurred every ten minutes... They would be pushing themselves to the limits! At this rate, they might very well end up pushing themselves too far and incur permanent damage to their foundations, resulting in a steep decline in their cultivation.

"I know, but there is no better solution at the moment." Wu shi sighed in frustration.

At this point, Luo Ruoxin suddenly spoke up. "Since it is just a matter of time before the energies burst forth, why don't you just create an opening to guide the rampaging energies out instead? This way, you should be able to resolve the root of the problem as well."

"Create an opening? It is not that we haven't considered such a solution before, but given the overwhelming energies that have accumulated at the moment, if we create an opening at the wrong

location, it could end up becoming a trigger for an explosion instead. The seal would be torn apart, and in the worst-case scenario... we could all die!" Wu shi said.

Using the same balloon analogy, a balloon that expanded continuously would burst eventually. To prevent such a situation from happening, one could poke an opening in it to release the accumulated air gradually. However, this was easier said than done. If one were to create an opening at the wrong location, it could very well become a trigger that would cause the balloon to explode instantaneously.

All of the master teachers that were currently standing atop the Swallow Embracing Mountain would be reduced to ashes.

As such, how many openings to create and where the openings should be made were very important questions to consider. A mistake made in either of the two could spell their demise. Even with 7-star master teachers and 7-star formation masters among them, they weren't confident enough to take such a risky action.

"So, we just have to find the most suitable locations to release the built-up energies?"

Hearing the conversation between the two, Zhang Xuan's eyes suddenly lit up. With a look of excitement, he said, "Regarding that matter... perhaps I can give it a try!"



# Chapter 1016: Zhang Xuan Breaks the Seal

## (1)

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As long as he could activate the formation, he would be able to find the flaws in it through the Library of Heaven's Path. That would be even more accurate than any compass that one could find.

It was nigh impossible for others to find the precise location of where the openings should be made, how big the openings should be, and how much strength one should exert in opening it. However, that happened to be the easiest thing in the world for Zhang Xuan.

"Give it a try?" Wu shi shook his head. "I know that Principal Zhang possesses extraordinary talent in the field of formations, but the implications are simply too great. Failure is not an option for us, so you mustn't act recklessly!"

Failure would spell the instantaneous explosion of the volcano, and that would reduce all of them to ash. This was no laughing matter, and it was definitely not something that one should 'give a try'.

"I know." Nodding in agreement, Zhang Xuan was just about to explain himself when a voice from the sky harrumphed coldly.

"Give it a try? Humph, can you bear the responsibility if something goes wrong? For a person as young as you to speak such big words, what is the world becoming?"

Hong long!

An elder bellowed coldly as he descended from the sky, heading toward the group. He was the 7-star pinnacle formation master who had been busy taking control of the situation to fortify the formation, Han Xu!

His face looked withered from the fatigue he had accumulated

over the days, but at this moment, not even his exhaustion could conceal the sharp coldness and displeasure he was directing toward Zhang Xuan.

"Guild Leader Han... Allow me to introduce you!" Wu shi hurriedly stepped forward to resolve the air of awkwardness drifting between them. "This is the newly-appointed principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, Zhang Xuan. This young lady over here is Luo shi. As for Mu shi over here, I don't think that I will have to introduce him since you are old friends with him. Principal Zhang and Luo shi, this is the head of our Qingyuan Empire Formation Master Guild, Han Xu!"

"You are Zhang Xuan?" Hearing the introduction, Han Xu turned to Zhang Xuan and said, "I have heard of you. To be able to become a 6-star formation master at such a young age, you are indeed an outstanding talent.

"However... as a master teacher, you must speak with prudence. Recklessness is the most common cause of the downfall of young talents. Everyone here knows that releasing the built-up energies within is a far better solution than forcefully stopping it, but do you know what the consequences of failure are? Not only will we die, everything within a radius of a thousand kilometers from here will be eradicated. Countless lives will vanish in an instant... Are you certain that you can shoulder such responsibility?"

Knowing that the other party was only berating him because the other party thought that he was taking such a grave matter lightly, Zhang Xuan quickly explained himself with a smile. "Guild Leader Han, you have misunderstood what I am saying. When I said that I would give it a try, I meant that I will do so only after I am entirely confident of success. Naturally, I dare not fool around with so many lives at stake!"

"How arrogant!" Yet another middle-aged man walked over with a disdainful look on his face. "This seal before us may very well be a grade-8 formation or even higher than that. My teacher and I

have analyzed it for more than two days now, but we are still unable to find a foolproof way to release the energies within the seal without triggering an explosion. Yet, without even taking a look at the formation, you are saying that you are confident of success? As the principal of a Master Teacher Academy, don't you think that you are being a little too arrogant here?"

The middle-aged man harnessed immense strength within him, such that even his very presence could exert great pressure on those looking at him.

Saint 3-dan, Embryonic Soul realm!

The Embryonic Soul realm was also known as the Origin Soul realm. In this cultivation realm, one's Origin Core would metamorphose into the form of a human, pushing one a step further toward the Primordial Spirit realm. Cultivators at the Embryonic Soul realm possessed incredibly powerful souls, allowing them to subdue cultivators far weaker than them with just the pressure exerted through their presence itself.

"Cough cough. Zhang shi, this gentleman over here is Guild Leader Han's student, 7-star Formation Master Liu Mo!" Not expecting the casual words from Zhang shi to cause such a fallout, Wu shi awkwardly attempted to remedy the situation.

For the past two days, Guild Leader Han and his student had put in a lot of effort to find a suitable node where they could release the energies. For this, they hadn't rested for even a single moment, but they were still unable to find a node that they were entirely confident was safe to open.

They were already cranky from the frustrating situation before them, but a fellow actually came by at such a moment and arrogantly said that he would give it a try, as if it was something that could be resolved very easily. In that instant, the frustration that had accumulated in them over the past two days was ignited into blazing rage.

"Liu Mo?" Zhang Xuan shook his head. "Never heard of you before."

He had never been to Qingyuan Empire before, so naturally, he knew nothing about the guild leader or formation masters in the Formation Master Guild there. Under normal circumstances, he wouldn't have pointed it out in view of the other party's pride. However, since the other party was behaving in such a manner, he couldn't be bothered to act courteously with the other party anymore either.

"You..." Not expecting the other party to retort to his words, Liu Mo flung his sleeves furiously and harrumphed. "It doesn't matter whether you heard of me or not. I am an ordinary formation master in the Qingyuan Empire Formation Master Guild anyway."

"You are misunderstanding my words, I am not just referring to you!" Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan looked at the other party earnestly and added, "I am saying that I have never heard of Guild Leader Han as well!"

"You..." Nearly exploding with fury, Liu Mo's face turned crimson.

Guild Leader Han also nearly spurted blood on the spot.

Even though he, Han Xu, couldn't say that his name was known throughout the entire Qingyuan Conferred Empire, he had at least been relatively well-known for several centuries now. Each year, there were countless master teachers who wished come under his lineage in hopes of studying the Way of Formations from him. Yet, this fellow before him had actually shot him down along with his student.

Yet, he simply couldn't flare up over this matter, or he would risk appearing petty. He felt so stifled that he could tear his hair out in frenzy.

Hearing the conversation between the two, Luo Ruoxin couldn't

help but chuckle.

To bicker with this fellow... You will be the one spurting blood in the end!

This fellow is one who doesn't care about conventions or rules, a person who dares to even insult Kong shi!

To think that you can win against someone like that is indubitably a gross overestimation of yourself!

Waving his hands leisurely, Zhang Xuan placed his hands behind his back before taking a step forward. "Alright, there is no need to get so agitated just because I don't know about you. As the principal of a Master Teacher Academy, I have many things on my agenda. I don't have time to find out the names of every single lad who comes my way!"

He gazed deeply into the massive depression before him for a moment before saying, "Wu shi, prepare a formation flag for me. It will best if it's a grade-7 pinnacle formation flag!"

"This..." Wu shi was conflicted.

Seeing that the other party was intent on creating an opening to let out the energies, Liu Mo immediately stood up and roared furiously, "Hold it right there! Do you really intend to bring so many people down with you?"

Did that fellow know what kind of risk he was putting everyone under?

He and his teacher had spent two days assessing the formation, but even they couldn't be entirely certain of their conclusion. Out of fear of the devastating explosion that could occur were they to fail, they dared not to even test it out. Yet, the other party had been here for only ten minutes, and he was already eagerly trying to create an opening in the seal.

There are more than twenty thousand master teachers up here! Even if you are tired of living, you need not bring everyone down

with you!

While the other principals were doing their best to ensure the safety of their students, this lunatic was trying to have his students buried with him. To act so recklessly without getting a clear view of the situation, just how in the world did such a fool get nominated as Hongyuan's principal?

"You are thinking too much... The reason the both of you aren't able to find the correct node to open the formation at, even after two days of effort, isn't because you aren't working hard enough but because you are fools! Naturally, I won't be the same as you two!" Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan ignored the two and walked up to the depression.

"Principal Zhang!" Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, the many students guarding the depression hurriedly stood up and looked at him with gazes of admiration.

"Un. You have all worked hard." Zhang Xuan nodded.

"It is our responsibility to work for the welfare of mankind," the students hurriedly replied.

Seeing the other party walking up to the seal, Liu Mo turned to look at his teacher anxiously. "Teacher, we mustn't allow that fellow to fool around!"

"Don't worry, it is not that easy to find a node. Even after two days of effort, we were only able to deduce five plausible nodes. There is no way that he will be able to find one that easily!" Guild Leader Han shook his head.

Honestly speaking, he didn't think that Zhang Xuan would be able to even deduce a plausible node that the energies could possibly be released from.

After all, even a 7-star pinnacle formation master like him was unable to find it even after two days of effort, so how could a 6-star formation master possibly succeed?

"But... I fear that he would recklessly create an opening in the seal despite his ignorance! If he gets it wrong, a calamity could very well befall us," Liu Mo said anxiously.

"Don't worry, even after he finds a node, he will need some time to create an opening to draw the energies out. We will have more than sufficient time to stop him." Guild Leader Han waved his hands confidently.

"Ah... I was too rash!" Hearing those words, Liu Mo heaved a sigh of relief.

Indeed, finding a node required time, and creating an opening to channel the energies out required time as well. As esteemed figures, there was no need for them to fall out at this point yet.

If the other party really intended to create an opening in the seal, it wouldn't be too late for them to stop it then.

"Un. I have heard a lot about this Principal Zhang, and it seems like he possesses extraordinary talent in the Way of Formations. It is a pity that he is still too young and reckless. However, this will be a good experience for him. Youngsters like him have to meet with a few failures before they learn that the world is far greater than what they can see. The Way of Formations is an extremely profound art. It is not something that someone who has just barely gotten a glimpse of it should speak lightly about!" Guild Leader Han chuckled.

"Let him give it a try first. Once he fails to find a node, he will realize his own ignorance."

"Yes!" Hearing those words, Liu Mo couldn't help but direct a gaze of admiration toward his teacher.

Do you see this? This is what a true master is like! Despite having been insulted by another, he is still thinking in the other party's stead.

Ignoring the conversing duo, Zhang Xuan began assessing the

seal before him carefully.

Green lines gathered within his black eyes—Eye of Insight.

This isn't working. This formation is too profound for my current eye of discernment and knowledge; I can't make sense out of it at all. Zhang Xuan shook his head.

If it had been any other formation, even if it was a grade-7 pinnacle formation, with his Eye of Insight and his comprehension of formations, he would surely have been able to find its flaws and decipher it with sufficient time.

But the one before him left him completely clueless.

I will have to use the Library of Heaven's Path for this one. Sighing deeply, a frown emerged on Zhang Xuan's forehead. But to use the Library of Heaven's Path, I will have to find a way to activate the formation. I won't be able to find its flaws in its current dormant state.

Frustrated, he pinched his glabella with his fingers.

The Library of Heaven's Path could only compile a book on a formation when it was active.

Even though the seal covering the ancient domain was suppressing the rampaging energies beneath it, it was actually still dormant. With the formation in such a state, Zhang Xuan wouldn't be able to compile a book on it even if he were to scream 'Flaws!'.

He would have to activate the formation, but... how could he do so?

Zhang Xuan fell into deep thought.

...

"He isn't using a compass at all? To be neither assessing the geographical terrain nor the flow of spiritual energy in the air... Does this fellow even know the first thing about formations?"

Liu Mo had been keeping a close eye on the arrogant Principal



Zhang, wanting to see how the other party would find a node after bragging so much. However, he only saw the latter standing in a daze before the depression, pinching his glabella in frustration.

For the other party to not take out his compass or even take a sweeping glance to assess his surroundings...

How in the world would one assess a formation like that?

"Perhaps this might be a unique method he has learned somewhere." Guild Leader Han was also bewildered by the sight before him.

"Let's hope that is the case... W-wait a moment. What is he doing?"

Just as Liu Mo nodded in agreement, he suddenly caught sight of Principal Zhang's actions, and he nearly fainted from sheer shock.

The other party had hesitated in front of the depression for a brief moment before abruptly lifting a massive boulder and tossing it into the depression.

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# Chapter 1017: Zhang Xuan Breaks the Seal

## (2)

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All kinds of defensive formations had been set up in the depression. Tossing a boulder over could be considered an attack, and it could very well incur the seal's retaliation.

While the other formation masters were relying on their compasses to search for the crux of formidable formations to decipher them, this fellow had actually tossed a boulder in. This was no longer an attempt to decipher the formation but one to activate it!

Even while the seal was dormant, the twenty thousand of them here coupled with two powerful formation masters were already finding it hard to stabilize the seal. If it were to be activated, wouldn't it cause a huge calamity?

Just what was in the mind of that fellow? Was there a loose screw in there or something?

Otherwise, how could he make such a foolish decision? He was a 6-star pinnacle formation master, but he was making an error that even an apprentice formation master would know better than to do!

Stifled, Han Xu and Liu Mo hurriedly rushed forward to stop the other party, but it was already too late. The boulder plummeted into the formation and came into contact with the seal.

However, it didn't induce a change in the seal.

Seeing that nothing had happened, Liu Mo heaved a sigh of relief. "That was a close one! It seems like the seal only reacts to living beings, so it wasn't activated after coming into contact with the boulder. Otherwise, I can't even begin to imagine what would have happened."

The seal was intricately linked to the rampaging energies that

had accumulated beneath it. Once activated, there was a good chance that it could cause a disturbance in the energies below and cause them to act up once more, thus bringing more work to the already exhausted students. In the worst-case scenario, it might even induce an explosion on the spot.

After the fellow tossed the boulder in, he had suddenly fallen still. As a 6-star pinnacle formation master, he must have realized how risky his previous action was and was trembling fearfully at the thought of what could have happened.

Just as Liu Mo thought the other party would give up, the other party abruptly beckoned with his hand, and one of the students of the Hongyuan Master teacher Academy rushed over. The other party leaned forward and whispered a few words into the other party's ears.

A grim expression immediately surfaced on the student's face. Without any hesitation, he bellowed loudly and jumped straight into the depression, heading toward the seal.

Pu!

Not expecting that the other party would disregard his own student's welfare and send him to his death, Liu Mo felt so stifled that he nearly fainted on the spot.

That fellow was a fool, but to think that his student would be even more foolish! To charge in like that... It was possible to activate the formation in such a manner, but the instant the formation came to life, that student would die!

"Preposterous!" While Liu Mo was shocked by the sight before him, his teacher was completely enraged by the scene.

While others regarded their own students as their own children, protecting and caring for them, this fellow actually sent his student into the depression to test out the seal. To recklessly place his student in such danger, just how much more ridiculous could

he get?

"Stop right there!" Bellowing furiously, Han Xu was just about to rush up to stop them when Zhang Xuan abruptly stretched his hand forward and grasped tightly. His zhenqi shot forth like a rope, swiftly wrapping around the student who had just jumped into the depression.

Just as he was about to come into contact with the seal, the zhenqi rope wrapped around the student abruptly pulled him back, dragging him out of the depression at an incredible speed.

At the same time, the seal seemed to have sensed the presence of life, and brilliant radiance flickered from it. However, contrary to Han Xu's previous worry, the activation of the seal didn't cause the explosion of the energies below. Instead, the formation whirred into action for a short moment before slowing to a stop, as if its activation wasn't complete.

"What precise control..." Guild Leader Han Xu's face warped in astonishment.

To be able to pull his student back in the very instant that the other party came into contact with the seal required an extremely deep understanding of the seal and very precise calculations of the positioning and velocity of his student!

Even the slightest centimeter of difference could either cause the formation to completely activate and devour the student or the formation to not sense the student altogether and result in nothing happening at all.

Of course, after the past two days of studying the formation, he was also capable of achieving the same feat. What truly left him astonished was the impressive teamwork and deep trust between the student and Principal Zhang!

Had there been the slightest difference in the action just a moment ago, the outcome could very well have been vastly

difference. For the student to remain completely still while falling into the depression, not struggling in the slightest, it could only mean that he had complete trust in Principal Zhang.

Furthermore, for the student to jump without any hesitation just because Principal Zhang told him to... If Han Xu were to issue the same command to Liu Mo, the latter was unlikely to do the same.

It was not that Liu Mo didn't trust him, but there was a clear line of difference between trust and blind faith.

After the student was retrieved, Principal Zhang froze on the spot once more, seemingly falling into a daze. A moment later, he turned around.

"Wu shi, are you done preparing the grade-7 pinnacle formation flag yet?"

After a moment of hesitation, Wu shi flicked his wrist and passed a formation flag over. "Here it is."

On top of being a 7-star pinnacle master teacher, he was a 7-star formation master as well. While his proficiency as a formation master was beneath that of Guild Leader Han, he still had a couple of grade-7 pinnacle formation flags in his possession.

"Un." Taking the formation flag, Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction. Without any hesitation, he stomped on the ground and flew into the air, heading toward the airspace right above the depression.

Driving his zhenqi, he grasped his formation flag tightly, seemingly searching for a node to plant it into.

"That fellow has gone bonkers! Liu Mo, hurry up and stop him!" Seeing that Principal Zhang was going to try creating an opening without even discussing the matter with them, Guild Leader Han nearly died of shock.

He had seen reckless people in his lifetime, but never had he seen someone as reckless as that!

Even if you have confirmed a node to plant your formation flag into, you should at least discuss the matter with us! To rush right over without saying a word at all... Are you really that confident that your judgement is correct?

You must know that if you err, it won't just be the twenty thousand master teachers on the Swallow Embracing Mountain who will pay for your mistake. It will be all living beings within a radius of a thousand kilometers!

This is truly making light of the matter!

"Yes!" Hearing his teacher's command, Liu Mo immediately flitted right toward Zhang Xuan.

At this moment, he was also extremely enraged by the impetuous actions of the other party. If he could, he really would tear the self-important fellow before him into pieces!

Hu!

Liu Mo thrust his palm forward, and a powerful burst of zhenqi shot forth from his hands.

In that instant, it seemed as if even the world had dulled before his powerful might as a Saint 3-dan cultivator.

"Hmm?"

Zhang Xuan was in the midst of searching for a node to stabilize the formation, but before he could make a move, he suddenly found that Liu Mo had launched an attack against him. His eyebrows immediately shot up in displeasure.

This fellow... just what kind of insanity streak was he on?

They had only had a small verbal conflict earlier. As a 7-star formation master, surely he didn't need to be so narrow-minded!

But since the other party had already made his move, he couldn't possibly sit idly and allow the other party to do as he pleased. With a deep frown, Zhang Xuan retaliated with a palm on his own.

Hong long!

Zhang Xuan's palm carried immense strength as well. Clashing squarely with the other party's palm strike, a deafening explosion resounded in the air. Surprisingly, they were actually equally-matched.

"What powerful strength!" Liu Mo narrowed his eyes in alarm.

Even though he had used less than a tenth of his strength to stop the other party, the fact that the other party had been able to parry his blow so easily went to show that the other party wasn't just an ordinary Nascent Saint!

With such strength, the other party was already on par with most Saint 2-dan cultivators!

Geji! Geji!

Liu Mo began gathering his strength once more to launch yet another attack at Zhang Xuan so as to force him to back down, but at that moment, a shrill sound abruptly echoed in the air.

Following which, the deep rumbling of thunder suddenly boomed beneath the ground, threatening to burst forth at any moment.

"This is bad, the rampaging energies are going to strike again..." Liu Mo's eyes widened in fear.

The rampaging energies struck once every ten minutes. Clearly, ten minutes had just passed, and it was ready to strike once more.

Liu Mo clenched his teeth tightly and roared furiously, "Stop what you're doing right there! If you don't wish to kill everyone here, you'd better stop moving right now!"

He knew full well that the rumbling heralded another burst of rampaging energies. It was already difficult for their group to withstand the burst as it was; if anything were to happen at this moment, their entire group might just be decimated!

Knowing that he had to stop Zhang Xuan at all costs, his hand darted swiftly toward the other party.

This was the most powerful attack he had. As soon as his hand clawed forward, the air surrounding the Swallow Embracing Mountain suddenly seemed to gather together, causing the flow of spiritual energy to halt.

Seeing that Liu Mo was making a move against him once more, Zhang Xuan frowned in displeasure. What is that fool trying to do?

Once the current wave of rampaging energies burst forth, the entire seal would be jolted, resulting in a slight deviation in the calculations he had made with great difficulty.

Due to the precarious situation of the seal, even the slightest deviation in the force and positioning when creating the opening could result in a vastly different outcome. As such, there was no room for error at all. He had just managed to find the correct node, and all he had to do at the moment was plant the flag, then the crisis would be averted. Yet, this fellow had caused trouble at this crucial moment.

Truly, there was nothing worse than a pig-like teammate!

No, this won't do. The energies below are about to burst forth, and once it does, I will have to redo my calculations right from the start once more, Zhang Xuan thought anxiously.

But this fellow is far stronger than me. I was only able to withstand his assault earlier because he underestimated me and didn't use his full strength. Now that he is putting his entirety into attacking me. He won't be able to kill me, but to dodge his attacks while successfully planting the formation flag into the node will be practically impossible.

The planting of the formation flag should have been something that only took an instant, but the matter had been complicated with that fellow causing trouble.



The other party was a Saint 3-dan cultivator. Even with Zhang Xuan's superior fighting prowess that allowed him to rival opponents stronger than him, he was still hardly a match for the other party.

"Since that's the case... pardon me!"

Knowing that he couldn't afford to be tied down by the other party at this crucial moment, Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes and bellowed loudly, "The students of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, listen to my command. Beat the living hell out of that fellow!"

"Yes!" Upon hearing their principal's command, the twenty thousand students simultaneously released a war cry as they raised their palms together.

Hong long!

Individually, these students weren't too powerful; a huge proportion of them were only at the Cosmos Bridge realm and Perfect Harmonization realm. However, when their strength was put together, they were a sight to behold. Twenty thousand surges of zhenqi gathered together as one, forming a massive dragon that charged furiously toward Liu Mo. Under the overwhelming might produced by the collaborative strength of the students, even the surrounding space began to distort under the pressure.

"This is bad..." Not expecting the other party to order all of his students to launch an attack against him, Liu Mo's face turned ashen.

He could already hardly fend for himself at this point, let alone persist in his attack against Zhang Xuan. Thus, he hurriedly retracted his palm and redirected his might toward the massive dragon headed toward him.

The next instant, the moment the two forces collided, Liu Mo's figure was rocketed backward as if a cannonball, spewing out huge

mouthfuls of blood in the midst of his flight.

Even a Saint 5-dan expert would have no choice but flee in the face of the combined might of the twenty thousand students, let alone him!

"Good!" Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

He could tell that his students had held back in their attack so that the other party wouldn't suffer any life-threatening damage. With the hindrance resolved, Zhang Xuan hurriedly aimed the formation flag in his grasp toward a certain location, preparing to throw it in.

"Hold it right there!"

But before the formation flag could leave his grasp, he heard another bellow. Glancing over, Zhang Xuan saw Guild Leader Han charging toward him as well.

Hong long long!

While Guild Leader Han made his move, the rumbling beneath the ground grew more and pronounced, heralding the imminent arrival of a devastating force.

Knowing that it would be too late if he didn't make a move soon, Zhang Xuan bellowed furiously once more. "Beat him down as well!"

"Yes!"

All of the students nodded simultaneously as they gathered their strength together once more, ready to strike down the lone figure in the air.

"You all dare..." Guild Leader Han's face turned livid.

He might have been a Saint 4-dan pinnacle expert, but he was still unable to withstand the simultaneous attack from twenty thousand students.

Clenching his jaws tightly, he roared indignantly, "I am trying to

save you all! If your principal's flag lands, all of you will be goners..."

Hong long!

But before he could finish his words, a powerful burst of radiance struck him.

The vision before him darkened before he was rocketed into the distance, similar to Liu Mo. His body crashed heavily into a cliff face some distance away, and the impact cloaked his entire body with a layer of dust.

# Chapter 1018: There's No Need to Tense Up; It Will Be Over Once I Put It in a Little!

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Guild Leader Han was on the brink of madness.

He just couldn't understand why these students had so much trust in that unreliable principal of theirs.

No matter what, he had spent the past two days working closely alongside them as comrades, and a bond of camaraderie had been forged between them. Under normal circumstances, even if it was at the command of their principal, shouldn't they have at least hesitated before attacking him?

Yet, without even bothering to spend time thinking the matter through, they had gathered their strength together and sent him flying.

This was no longer obedience; it was more like they were Principal Zhang's devout followers!

He had even informed them that they might very well lose their lives should their principal identify the wrong node, and yet, their attack hadn't even wavered in the slightest.

What did this signify? It meant that they were all willing to stake their entirety on the twenty-year-old youth before him without any hesitation. Even if the other party was their principal, surely they didn't need to trust him so much that they even abandoned their common sense!

This was truly one of the most eccentric bunch of students he had ever met!

Struggling up from a pile of fragmented rocks, he turned his gaze toward the sky once more and saw that the formation flag had already left Zhang Xuan's hand, headed toward a node.

"We're doomed." Guild Leader Han's eyes were glazed with

hopelessness.

It happened that he had done the calculations for the node that the other party was throwing at as well, and it was a point where the energies were the most volatile. If a formation flag was thrown into that point, not only would it not alleviate the situation, it would even induce an explosion with utmost certainty.

Who could have thought that he, Han Xu, despite the great fame and achievements he had accrued in his lifetime, would end up dying in such a manner, dragged down by an impertinent fellow who obstinately drove them down the path of demise? Just the thought of it left him feeling incredibly stifled, and he couldn't help but wallow in self-pity.

Boom!

The next moment, the rampaging energies beneath the ground finally gathered sufficient momentum to burst forth.

Weng!

The ground began to tremor with astonishing intensity. Caught off guard by the sudden shaking, a couple of students standing by the edge of the depression lost their balance and fell to the ground.

Upon seeing such a sight, fear surfaced in the eyes of Wu shi and the others.

"It seems like this burst is far stronger than the ones before." Guild Leader Han's complexion turned incredibly awful as he shook his face in disbelief.

This burst of energies was clearly many times stronger than the ones before. The seal suppressing the burst of energies distorted menacingly under the immense pressure, as if it would be torn to shreds at any moment.

Even if every single person present were to devote their full strength to reinforcing the seal, it was still utterly impossible for them to suppress this burst of energies.

Just what in the world happened? Why would there suddenly be such a powerful burst of energies?

"It's over..." Guild Leader Han despaired.

They had barely hung on even when dealing with the weaker bursts of energies previously, so against such devastating force... Without a doubt, there was no way the seal could withstand this. The immense might would tear through the seal, inducing a massive explosion that would reduce everything within several thousand kilometers to dust!

Just when he thought that all hope was lost, Principal Zhang's voice suddenly sounded from above.

"Here, here. There's no need to tense up; it will be over once I put it in a little!"

Right after those words were spoken, the formation flag flew forward at an even greater speed, stabbing right into the node the other party had identified beforehand.

Hu!

As soon as the flag came into contact with the node, the imminently-exploding seal suddenly lost its ferocity, as if a wolfhound whose tail had been stepped on. With a pop, it abruptly calmed down, becoming as gentle as the placid waters of a roadside puddle.

Following which, a deafening blast sounded from the node, and an immense blast of energies burst toward the heavens. It was as if a hole had been pricked into a balloon, and the vast amount of gas trapped within, upon finally finding an escape route, hurriedly charged out of it. Due to the powerful blast, it felt as if the sky was going to be severed into two.

"This... the crisis has been resolved?" Guild Leader Han's body stiffened from shock. Unable to believe what he was seeing, he rubbed his eyes forcefully.

Wasn't that node the area where the energies were the most volatile? How could the energies be released so smoothly right after the formation flag was planted into it?

Guild Leader Han wasn't the only one who was perplexed by the situation before him. Liu Mo, who had only just returned from his long flight, was dumbfounded by what he saw right after his return as well.

Without using a compass or studying the terrain, the other party had simply picked up a formation flag and thrown it randomly... and the rampaging energies had been released just like that?

Is there really such a maneuver in the Way of Formations? Why am I unaware of it even after studying formations for so many years?

Liu Mo couldn't help but turn his eyes toward the students below, only to see them gazing at the sight before them with perfect nonchalance, as if knowing that their principal would be able resolve the rampaging energies easily.

He and his teacher had spent two whole days working on the formation, only to remain nearly as clueless as they had been at the start. On the other hand, the other party had casually planted a flag a few minutes after he arrived, and the crisis was resolved.

Could it be that when the other party said that they were dumb earlier... it wasn't intended as an insult toward them but a simple fact?

Just as Han Xu and Liu Mo were feeling deeply stifled within, they saw Zhang Xuan slowly descending from the sky before eventually stopping before his students.

"You have worked hard for the past two days. The problem here has been resolved, so quickly return and have a good rest!"

"Thank you, Principal Zhang!"

"I knew it; there is nothing in the world that Principal Zhang

can't possibly resolve!"

"Guild Leader Han was prattling on about being a 7-star pinnacle formation master or something a while ago, but from the looks of it now, it doesn't seem like he is anything much."

"Well, it is usually the incapable who find a need to boast about their own abilities. Look at our Principal Zhang, despite the great capabilities he possesses, has he even bragged about them even once?"

"Indeed! Principal Zhang is simply too humble. I must learn from his example..."

...

Hearing the confirmation from their principal that the crisis had been resolved, a huge commotion broke out amid the crowd. Many faces reddened in agitation, and a huge number of students hurriedly sat onto the ground and began driving their cultivation technique to recuperate from their weakness and fatigue.

Two days of intense work had depleted them greatly, and quite a number of them had sustained significant internal injuries as a result.

However, it was fortunate that there was nothing too severe. With sufficient time, they would all be able to make a full recovery.

While the students were recuperating from their exertion, Zhang Xuan carefully assessed the condition of each individual student. Upon seeing any student whose injuries were too severe, he would step forward and treat them personally.

"No wonder... This explains why the students have unconditional trust in him, entrusting themselves to him without any hesitation at all. They don't just regard him as their principal, but their teacher, friend, and comrade as well..."

Witnessing this scene, Guild Leader Han and Liu Mo smiled



bitterly. At this moment, they finally understood why the students had chosen to trust Zhang Xuan over them in the crucial moment.

As a principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, the other party's standing could be said to be even above theirs. Yet, such a figure was taking care of 4-star and 5-star master teachers meticulously without the slightest hint of impatience. Just this in itself was something that most weren't able to do.

"Alright..."

After confirming that his students were fine, Zhang Xuan returned to where Wu Shi and the others were standing. He turned his gaze toward Guild Leader Han and Liu Mo and clasped his fist hurriedly. "Please do pardon my previous insolence. It was a critical situation then, and I feared that any delay could result in a disastrous outcome."

"Principal Zhang, there is no need to apologize to us. We are the ones who have acted rashly." Guild Leader Han and Liu Mo's faces flushed crimson. If there was a hole in the ground at this moment, they would have surely leaped in without any hesitation.

Their intentions had been out of goodwill; a mistake in that situation could have easily resulted in a disastrous outcome. Yet, they had nearly caused everyone's death due to their incompetence. The guilt that they were feeling at this moment weighed down on them heavily.

It was fortunate that Principal Zhang had decisively commanded his students to knock them down in that moment, not bothering with etiquette. Otherwise... they would have gone down in history as sinners.

"It will take some more time for the energies to be released, and the seal isn't going to open anytime soon. Since that's the case, why don't we return to Firesource City for the time being and await the arrival of those from the Combat Master Hall?" Zhang Xuan proposed.

While the situation with the seal had been resolved, it would still take some time before they would be able to enter it. For one, it would take at least two to three days for the immense buildup of rampaging energies beneath the seal to disperse completely.

Furthermore, the members from the Combat Master Hall and the other three Master Teacher Academies hadn't arrived yet. To maximize the expedition's chances of success, it would be best for them to venture in only after the full team had arrived.

"Alright." Nodding, the crowd got onto an aerial saint beast and flew back to Firesource City.

Zhang Xuan and the others were settled into a huge manor that the regional Master Teacher Pavilion owned. As for the twenty thousand students, Zhang Xuan arranged for School Head Zhao and the others to take them back to the academy.

Threats were bound to be lurking throughout the ancient domain, and it would be too dangerous for the students to join the expedition as well.

A day later, the principals and elders of the other three Master Teacher Academies, as well as those from the Combat Master Hall, finally arrived.

Liao Song had escorted Zheng Yang to the Combat Master Hall headquarters and hadn't returned yet. However, two Saint 3-dan pinnacle Thousand Men Commanders had been dispatched instead.

"You are Principal Zhang?"

Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, one of the two Thousand Men Commander immediately emanated a deep aura of hostility.

He had heard about the Combat Master Hall's tragic defeat in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, and he also knew that even though the cultivation of the young man before him was at Nascent Saint, his true fighting prowess was far greater than even

combat masters like them.

"That's right." Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Do you dare have a match with me?" the Thousand Men Commander challenged.

"A match?" A troubled look surfaced on Zhang Xuan's face.

All he wanted to do was keep a low profile and peacefully remain as the dashing young man he was in the background, was that really that much to ask for?

Being too outstanding sure was tiring!

"Indeed! Do you dare accept my challenge or not?" The Thousand Men Commander eyed Zhang Xuan provocatively.

"It is the first time we are meeting, and it won't do for us to sour our relationship with a match like that. Why don't you allow me to treat you to a drink instead?" Zhang Xuan took out a wine gourd and offered it to the other party earnestly.

However, the Thousand Men Commander shook his head and harrumphed coldly. "You don't want to accept my challenge? Very well. I will find a way to show you that the Combat Master Hall isn't an organization that anyone can humiliate!"

After which, he turned around and left.

Through asking around, Zhang Xuan learned that the name of the Thousand Men Commander was Feng Xun, and he was one of the more pro-combat members of the Combat Master Hall. When he heard that the combat masters who had gone to Hongyuan to assess the potential candidates had been thrashed instead, he couldn't help but feel great hostility toward the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy. Ever since then, he had been wanting to spar with Zhang Xuan to regain the Combat Master Hall's dignity.

The other Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall went by the name of Jiang Yuan, and while he looked amicable on

the surface, his eyes were filled with fighting will as well.

Combat masters had always been synonymous with the word 'invincible', and yet, they had actually suffered multiple setbacks when facing the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy. As Thousand Men Commanders, they viewed it as their responsibility to recover the dignity of the Combat Master Hall.

Mu shi walked up to Zhang Xuan and explained, "Senior Uncle, our Qingyuan Conferred Empire has dispatched four men for this mission; me, Wu shi, Guild Leader Han, and Liu Mo. As for the Combat Master Hall, other than Feng Xun, Jiang Yuan, and Zhuo Qingfeng, there are another twelve more combat masters. Last but not least, for the three Master Teacher Academies, the three principals have come with two elders each, making up nine people in total. All in all, our expedition team has a strength of around thirty or so."

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Initially, Zhao Bingxu and the others had wanted to join the expedition team as well, but Zhang Xuan hadn't agreed to it.

The ancient domain was lurking with danger. Should something bad befall him, the Ten Great Master Teachers should at least be around to take care of the academy, or else it would fall into chaos.

"According to my calculations, the ancient domain will open tomorrow. We will be setting forth tomorrow morning," Mu shi said.

"Alright." Zhang Xuan nodded.

After bidding Mu shi farewell, Zhang Xuan returned to his residence, and just as he was about to rest, he noticed Luo Ruoxin sitting on one of the stone seats in his courtyard. Her right elbow was pressed against the stone table, her right fist supporting her head. A contemplative look was on her face, but it was impossible to tell what she was thinking of.

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# Chapter 1019: Holding Hands

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She seemed to be a little out of it, such that she didn't even notice when Zhang Xuan walked over. The brilliant moon cast a pale glow upon her body, making her appearance reminiscent of an ethereal fairy who could fly away in the next moment.

"To daze off like that, what are you thinking of?" Zhang Xuan asked with a smile.

"Nothing much..." Recovering from her daze, Luo Ruoxin shook her head. Standing up, she glanced at the brilliant moon and asked, "Will you accompany for a walk outside?"

Zhang Xuan was taken aback by the request for a moment before delight captured his entire face. Without a second's delay, he replied excitedly, "Of course, it will be my pleasure too!"

Seeing the other party's excited expression, Luo Ruoxin shook her head with a helpless smile. "Do you display your emotions explicitly in everything else you do as well?"

Most people would usually try their best to conceal their delight before her, wanting to appear dignified and cultured. Yet, this fellow was the complete opposite. He was candid and straightforward, doing whatever was on his mind without any worry at all. His carefree personality sure was enviable.

"I..." The abrupt question left Zhang Xuan a little nervous. "Actually, I have been concealing something all this while..."

"Oh?" Hearing those words, Luo Ruoxin's interest was piqued. Turning her beautiful eyes to him, she said, "Tell me about it!"

"To be honest, I am a peaceful person who prefers to maintain a low profile, but things somehow never go the way I want them to..." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"Low profile?" Seeing how earnestly the other party was saying those words, Luo Ruoxin burst into laughter. The forlorn

expression on her face from a moment ago vanished from sight, and she couldn't help but remark, "You sure have concealed it well; I couldn't tell at all!"

No matter where that fellow went, he was always the brightest star in everyone's sight. There couldn't be anyone that was even more high profile than him... and yet, at this moment, he was actually saying that he was a peaceful person who preferred to maintain a low profile?

Where was his face?

She would usually be repulsed by such shamelessness, but for some reason, she didn't have such a reaction toward the young man beside her. On the contrary, being alongside the other party left her feeling very relaxed, bringing her tranquility.

At the other party's reaction, Zhang Xuan shook his head. "I knew that you wouldn't believe me!"

He was truly a low-profile person in the depths of his heart, but fate just loved to play tricks on others. Too outstanding, he shone brightly like a firefly in the dark no matter where he went, unable to conceal his glow no matter what he did.

"Hahahaha!" Seeing the other party's serious response, Luo Ruoxin couldn't help but chuckle once more.

Beneath the night sky, amid chatter, the duo walked out of the manor they were staying in.

The onset of the night had brought the scorching temperatures down considerably. Tempted by the cooling weather, those who had been hiding in their homes before stepped out of their doors, filling the streets with a huge crowd.

Zhang Xuan had no idea what kind of method Luo Ruoxin used to disguise herself, but despite her beautiful appearance, she didn't seem to stand out from the crowd. As such, while there were exclamations of marvel from time to time, they didn't catch too

many eyes.

After walking a distance, Zhang Xuan suddenly came to a halt and pointed forward. "Due to the peculiar climate of Firesource City, it has many unique delicacies that can't be found anywhere else. There is a tavern just ahead, so why don't we rest there for a moment and try out their local cuisine?"

Luo Ruoxin glanced ahead and saw a grand building. Above the entrance of the building hung a plaque with three words on it: 'Dream Reminiscence Tavern'.

"Life, a reminiscence of a dream. A lifetime of haste and worries, perchance better spent merrymaking with wine... What a poetic name!" Luo Ruoxin remarked meaningfully.

The interior of the tavern was extravagantly designed, but it had a warm atmosphere as well. The attendants that were moving around the place possessed a cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 5-dan at the very least. With just a look, it was apparent that the tavern was anything but simple.

"Guests, this way please..." An attendant welcomed them before settling them into a table for two by the window.

Zhang Xuan shot Luo Ruoxin a glance, and only after confirming that the latter wasn't unhappy with this arrangement did he heave a sigh of relief and sit down.

"Bring us a plate of all of your specialties please."

"Sure thing!"

The attendant hurriedly left, and before long, a huge array of delicacies and a bottle of fine wine were spread out grandly on the table before them.

Zhang Xuan had to admit that the food and wine in this tavern were indeed excellent. The earth flames that Firesource City was rich in didn't just bring about superior weapons, it was also the key to the exceptionally fragrant wine they produced in the region.



Just a single sip could make one addicted to it, craving more.

"This Golden Lake Carp is a unique species found only in the Golden Lake on the Swallow Embracing Mountain. It only reproduces once every ten years, making it very short in supply. It has no scales, and its flesh is particularly fresh too. It is best when steamed with yellow wine..."

"This is the liver of the Blue Sparrow. Just steam it with a slight touch of sesame oil, and it will be ready to be feasted upon. This dish is not only rich in spiritual energy, its taste is also top-notch..."

"This is the famous Greentip Bamboo Meat of Firesource City. Its main ingredient is Greentip Bamboo, a plant that only grows in Firesource City. Once heated up, it will gain a texture reminiscent of bacon, giving a nice crisp to it..."

Zhang Xuan introduced the various dishes as they feasted on the food before them.

With just a taste, he could compile a book on each of them in the Library of Heaven's Path. Putting aside introducing the dishes, he could easily point out dozens of flaws in the cooking without repeating any points.

"You are a gourmet?" Luo Ruoxin was surprised to hear the other party's detailed introduction of the dishes.

Despite the young age of the man seated before her, he possessed strength far beyond his age, and his mastery of his supporting occupations was also formidable. It was almost as if there was nothing in the world that he was incapable of.

This was especially so for gourmet. It was one of the most inconspicuous occupations of the Lower Nine Paths, and they would usually only be responsible in trying out new dishes and introducing them to noble personages. As such, they didn't have much standing.

Thus, she couldn't help but be perplexed that the principal of a Master Teacher Academy would actually spend his time on studying it as well.

"I happen to have read some books on them in the past, so I do know a little bit here and there," Zhang Xuan explained.

"Impressive, you sure are well read," Luo Ruoxin complimented.

A stark contrast to Zhang Xuan wolfing down the food without the slightest bit of elegance, Luo Ruoxin ate gracefully in small mouthfuls. Her subtle mannerisms hinted at the fine upbringing she had.

...

After having their fill of good, Zhang Xuan turned to Luo Ruoxin and said, "If you have anything on your mind, perhaps speaking of it will make you feel better. My cultivation might be low, but I am still capable of resolving most problems."

He could tell that the other party had some troubles on her mind, and that was also why he had been jesting around, hoping to put the other party in a better mood. However... it seemed like his efforts weren't really paying off.

"It's nothing much..." Luo Ruoxin paused for a brief moment before shaking her head. "It's just that I have met with some matters recently that made me a little homesick."

"Homesick? You... Are you really from one of the Sage Clans, the Luo Clan?" Zhang Xuan asked doubtfully.

There had been many rumors regarding Luo Ruoxin's true identity going around the Master Teacher Academy, the notable ones being that she was from the esteemed Luo Clan.

Otherwise, it didn't make sense for even a 7-star master teacher like Mu shi to treat her so respectfully.

"Sage Clan?" The young lady shook her head with a smile, neither

admitting nor denying it. Instead, she looked at Zhang Xuan and asked, "What about your family? Where are they? I haven't really heard you talking about them before."

Seeing that Luo Ruoxin was unwilling to speak of the matter, Zhang Xuan decided not to ask too much about it either. "I don't have any family members. I am an orphan."

"An orphan?" Luo Ruoxin was slightly stunned by the response.

"Un, I did not have any kin while growing up," Zhang Xuan said.

He had never met any of his kin after transcending from Earth. Not only so, his previous self also had no recollection of the sort.

It was through great hard work that his previous self had managed to become a teacher of Hongtian Academy, but even so... he had ended up causing his student's cultivation to go berserk and nearly had his license revoked!

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to bring it up," Luo Ruoxin hurriedly apologized.

"It's fine; I am already used to it. I'm quite happy with my situation. I am able to travel wherever I want to freely without any care in the world!" Zhang Xuan chuckled.

In a sense, he also liked his current lifestyle as well. Journeying through the world freely, there was nothing to tie him down other than the couple of direct disciples he had.

"You sure are optimistic..." Luo Ruoxin could see in the other party's eyes that he was indeed enjoying the current life he had, and she nodded in approval.

Without any backing or connections, he had been able to rise to the position of the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy by the time he was twenty through his own hard work. While other party might seem unreliable at times, there was no doubt that he was a person worthy of respect.

Just by the unconditional trust the students had in him and the unwavering loyalty the academy elders showed him... all of this was testimony to his outstanding capability.

As long as he was around, even the most impossible of tasks could be resolved easily.

There were plenty of outstanding figures around her, and most of them were far stronger than the young man before her when they were at his age. However... that was due to their high starting point. Were they to start from the same origin, there would probably be less than a handful who could catch up to him!

To reach Nascent Saint pinnacle at such a young age and become the principal of a Master Teacher Academy, winning the unwavering loyalty of the students and acknowledgement of the world... his charisma was something that very few could match.

What particularly stood out was the other party's mental resilience. Even in the face of a crisis, he could retain his composure and resolve it perfectly. As long as he was given time to grow, there was no doubt that he would achieve great things in the future.

Unknowingly, Luo Ruoxin's view of the young man before her had changed tremendously.

In the past, she had only felt a peculiar intimacy toward him. However, as time passed, she had gradually realized that he possessed a radiance unmatched by anyone else in the world, leaving the others paling in comparison. Her eyes couldn't help but be drawn to him.

Unknowingly, the young man had stoked a peculiar sentiment within her.

It was just a sliver at the moment, but it was something that had never happened before.

"Let's return."

After chatting for a while longer, they began making their way back to the manor.

The brilliant moon hanging high in the night sky drew out long, slender shadows behind the both of them. A light breeze blew, and the faint fragrance of the young lady drifted in the air. It was a comfortable scent.

Zhang Xuan had never felt so tranquil before in his life. His hand stretched forward and touched the back of the young lady's hand. It felt soft and smooth, reminiscent of cotton.

Luo Ruoxin's body stiffened slightly as she instinctively retracted her hand and hugged it before her chest. With a reddened face, she exclaimed, "I will be going on ahead first!"

After saying those words, she rushed off. In an instant, she had already disappeared from view.

"She's gone," Zhang Xuan remarked lamentably. Slapping his forehead, he shook his head in utmost regret. "Why did I have to do that?"

If he hadn't reached out for her hand, he could still have been walking with her. Perhaps, they could have chatted a little longer. If the other party were to blame him for this matter, would they be unable to remain friends?

How could he have been so foolish!

Vexed, Zhang Xuan decided to just assess the other party's attitude tomorrow morning before deciding what he could do. Hopefully, if the other party wasn't too angry, he could just feign ignorance and get along with her as if nothing had happened.

Shaking his head, he was just about to make his way back to the manor when a sound suddenly echoed from the depths of the alley.

"Farewell, my kin and my friends. I have truly brought all of you great shame!"

Perplexed, Zhang Xuan walked over and saw a man in his early thirties kneeling before the entrance of a residence, grieving sorrowfully.

His body was covered with fresh blood, and his face was cloaked with a layer of dust, giving him an unkempt appearance. It was likely that he had just survived some kind of dangerous situation.

"Farewell!"

After kowtowing a few more times, the middle-aged man stood up. He flicked his wrist, and a sword appeared in his hands. He placed it against his neck as he prepared to slit his throat.

He is committing suicide? Not expecting to meet with a person trying to end his life while walking along the streets, Zhang Xuan hurriedly flicked his finger.

Weng!

A burst of light shot forth, and the sword was struck out of the man's grip. It pierced deeply into a nearby wall, vibrating endlessly.

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# Chapter 1020: Violetgilt Metal

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Having his sword abruptly knocked flying, the middle-aged man was taken aback. He hurriedly turned his head around and saw a young man walking over.

"Even ants struggle to continue living, so why do you seek the end?" Zhang Xuan said.

Walking closer, he noted that the middle-aged man possessed a cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 9-dan primary stage. With such strength, he could definitely be considered as an expert in Firesource City.

"I appreciate elder's concern, but I desire nothing more than death..." Knowing that a person who could flick his sword off his hand from a distance away was bound to be far stronger than him, the middle-aged man replied respectfully, not underestimating the other party just because of his young age.

Nevertheless, there was still a forlorn gaze in his eyes.

"To be able to cultivate to a level likes yours before thirty, you are quite an outstanding genius. What is it that left you in such deep despair, such that even living has become a chore to you?" Zhang Xuan asked, intrigued.

Even with the rich resources in Firesource City, a person who could reach Transcendent Mortal 9-dan before thirty could be considered to be an outstanding genius.

A person as talented as the other party had a bright future ahead of him, so why was he attempting to end his life?

"I really can't bring myself to continue living any longer..." The middle-aged man shook his head. "In Firesource City, a land rich in earth flames, the most respected occupation is blacksmith. From seven, I have been studying under Grandmaster Blacksmith Sun Jin as an apprentice. I thought that I would eventually be accepted

as his student and rise to great heights... but who knew that I would fail the blacksmith examination for ten years consecutively! For twenty-four whole years, I have remained as a mere apprentice... A person as dull-witted and incapable as me doesn't deserve to live. I have truly brought shame to my family members and the occupation..."

"You have been an apprentice for twenty-four years?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback. "So... you aren't even a 1-star blacksmith at the moment?"

Going by the ranking standard, a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan expert should have been a 5-star pinnacle blacksmith at the minimum. Yet, to still remain as an apprentice... Was this for real?

Could there really be such an untalented person in the world?

"Un. Every time I attempt to forge a weapon, I will find myself being unable to control the temperature of the earth flames well, resulting in the metal ingot going to ruins... After the previous examination I had, my teacher finally couldn't stand in incompetence any longer and evicted me from his lineage. My family members are still anticipating the day which I become a blacksmith and bring glory to our family name, and yet, I ended up letting all of them down instead. What rights do I have to face the world..." The more the middle-aged man spoke about his matter, the more depressed he became.

Zhang Xuan was slightly surprised.

A Transcendent Mortal 9-dan expert had been studying smithing ever since he was seven, and yet hadn't cleared the 1-star blacksmith examination even after twenty-four years of effort? No matter how untalented the other party was, surely it couldn't possibly be to such an extent?

If that was true, it wouldn't be too hard to imagine the despair the other party was feeling.



"But just what could have happened for him to be unable to clear even the 1-star blacksmith examination?" Zhang Xuan was perplexed.

It might be challenging for a Tongxuan realm 1 cultivator to clear the 1-star blacksmith examination, but as a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan expert, a person who had cultivated his soul and was capable of precise movements, how could the other party be incapable of smithing a Mortal-tier weapon and qualify as a 1-star blacksmith?

"I have no idea as well. Somehow, I am just unable to successfully smith a weapon." the middle-aged man shook his head.

His multiple failures in the examination had sapped him of his confidence.

"Unable to smith a weapon?" Perplexed, Zhang Xuan looked at the middle-aged man before him with a frown and asked, "Can you smith the most basic weapon you know of for me?"

To think that a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan expert would be incapable of clearing even a mere 1-star blacksmith examination, this was something that was completely inconceivable to Zhang Xuan. It was simply ridiculous, there was no one out in the world who would dare believe this to be true.

"Elder, thank you for saving my life, but I have already made up my mind. Even if I were to smith that weapon, it won't change my mind. A person as useless as me will be better off dead!" the middle-aged man bowed deeply and said.

"There is plenty of time for you to seek the end, there is no need to rush into it now. I happen to be a rather experienced blacksmith myself, and I am intrigued by the problem you are afflicted by. Perhaps, if you show me your smithing process, I might just be able to identify the root of your problem and help you resolve it." Zhang Xuan said.

If the other party was determined on attempting suicide, there

was nothing he could do about it. However, the fact that a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan was unable to qualify as a 1-star blacksmith after so many years of effort was bewildering to him, and he felt that there was a need to get to the bottom of it.

"This..." The middle-aged man hesitated.

"Since you are going to end your life anyway, it shouldn't matter, right? It won't be too late for you to do whatever you want to after I fail." Zhang Xuan smiled.

"... Very well then." The middle-aged man nodded.

Indeed. Since he was going to end his life, what did he have to lose?

"There is a chamber which I use for smithing weapons not too far away. All of the required items for smithing are there, so let's head over."

After saying these words, the middle-aged man led the way ahead. Not too long later, they arrived at a rather small chamber.

The chamber had everything that a blacksmith would need, be it earth flames or cauldron. There was a rack placed alongside one of the walls which was filled with a lot of ores. There were a couple of them that were extremely rare, such that it would be difficult to find them in the market. Despite the middle-aged man's low proficiency in smithing, it seemed like he was quite a collector of ores.

Assessing the area, Zhang Xuan's gaze suddenly fell on one of the ores, and his eyelids began twitching in shock.

"Is that... Violetgilt Metal?"

Violetgilt Metal was an extremely rare ore which could be infused into certain types of weapons to boost its might.

"Using this ore and a smithing technique that complements it, I will be able to induce a breakthrough in the Golden Origin

Cauldron!" Zhang Xuan's eyes gleamed in agitation.

Having made a promise to the Golden Origin Cauldron back when the latter first submitted to him, he had been looking into the various methods of raising its strength. However, due to the lack of required ores, he had no choice but to put off the matter aside again and again.

Who could have thought that he would find the required ore here?

"I am going to start." Oblivious to Zhang Xuan's astonishment, the middle-aged man said nonchalantly before walking up to his weapon cauldron.

Driving his zhenqi, his hand grasped forward to draw the earth flames from the ground.

A searing blaze surged into the chamber, and under the overwhelming heat, the chamber walls glowed crimson. The middle-aged man flicked his wrist and took out a metal hammer. After which, he grabbed a piece of iron and placed it into the cauldron.

A few moments later, after the iron had softened under the intense heat, he began to hammer it.

Ding ding dang dang!

Under the powerful hammering, it didn't take long for the iron ingot to be shaped into a sharp sword.

Zhang Xuan had to acknowledge that the middle-aged man had reached an incredible mastery in his forging skills, superior to even a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith like him.

Soon, after the shaping of the weapon was finally forged, the middle-aged man extended his hand forward once more, intending to draw earth flames to temper the weapon. Yet, at this moment, the earth flames suddenly ran out of control. It rushed forward with astonishing ferocity, reducing the freshly forged weapon back

into a pile of metallic fluid, thus rendering his previous efforts futile.

"Failure again... I knew that I couldn't possibly succeed..." Sighing deeply, despondency surfaced in the middle-aged man's eyes.

He couldn't help but wish for a miracle to happen each time he forged. Perhaps, he might just succeed this time. Yet, like many times before, his prayers hadn't come true.

"This..."

In contrast to the middle-aged man despondency, Zhang Xuan frowned after seeing the other party's smithing process.

With his eye of discernment, even without the Library of Heaven's Path, he was still able to easily see through the issues in the other party's smithing.

There wasn't any significant mistake in the other party's forging, but as for the tempering... It appeared that there was a conflict between the other party's zhenqi and the earth flames, resulting in the other party's inability to control the earth flames. As a result, the earth flames ended up running out of control, devouring the forged weapon clean...

To put it in other words, the issue lay in not what the other party had done but the internal condition of his body. The zhenqi in the other party's body happened to have an attribute that was at odds with the earth flames, causing the earth flames to run amok. This was also the reason why the forged weapon ended up becoming a pile of metallic liquid when he attempted to temper it, rendering his efforts futile.

"Surely a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith should be able to tell that there is a conflict between his zhenqi and the earth flames?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

What that had left Zhang Xuan baffled wasn't how difficult it was

to discern the middle-aged man's problem but how easy it was to do so. It was understandable that the middle-aged man wasn't aware of it as he wasn't even a 1-star blacksmith yet, thus he wasn't qualified to access books beyond that of an apprentice. However, there was no way a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith could be oblivious to it.

It was fundamental knowledge for them!

But if so, why didn't the Sun Jin person whom the other party spoke about inform the other party of the matter? Why didn't he try to correct the other party's flaw?

"Wait a moment..." As Zhang Xuan contemplated over the matter, his eyebrows suddenly leaped up.

The reason why a conflict would occur was due to one's cultivation technique being incompatible with the earth flames, but if the middle-aged man had started learning smithing from that Sun Jin person ever since he was seven, how could he still suffer from such a fundamental issue?

"Unless it was done on purpose..." Zhang Xuan's eyes narrowed into slits.

Given the circumstances surrounding the middle-aged man, the only possible reasoning for such a situation was that someone had intentionally taught him the wrong cultivation technique from the start.

But... what did that person have to gain from teaching him the wrong cultivation technique?

Perplexed, Zhang Xuan scanned the room to see if he could find any clues when a thought suddenly surfaced in his mind.

Turning to the middle-aged man, he asked, "Are you the one who found these ores?"

"That's right." The middle-aged man nodded, slightly baffled by Zhang Xuan's abrupt question. "Due to the high concentration of

earth flames around Firesource City, there are plenty of ores in the area... Through the natural affinity between the ores and my zhenqi, I am able to locate them quite easily."

"Natural affinity between the ores and your zhenqi?"

"That's right. Our cultivation techniques are imparted by Sun Jin laoshi. As long as we cultivate hard, we will gain a keen sensitivity towards ores, allowing us to find them easily..." The middle-aged man nodded.

"We? Are there many who cultivate the same cultivation technique as you?" Zhang Xuan asked.

The middle-aged man contemplated for a brief moment before replying, "There are. There are around thirty apprentices who had studied alongside me back then. However, most of them were devoured by the earth flames while searching for ores, so there are only me and another one left."

"Is the other surviving person unable to become a blacksmith as well?" As if having come to a realization, Zhang Xuan asked grimly.

"That's right. He's a year older than me, and unable to stand the shame from consecutive failure, he eventually succumbed to the pressure and ended his life last year..." Recalling the fate of his companion, the middle-aged man shook his head and sighed.

To be unable to qualify as a blacksmith even after studying for so many years, it wasn't too difficult to imagine how despondent the other party must have felt.

"Committed suicide?" Zhang Xuan was astonished. He took a sweeping gaze around the room before asking, "Then... where do the ores you collect go to? Surely there should be more than this?"

Since the middle-aged man had an uncanny ability to locate ores, he must have found many of them in the past twenty-four years of his life. He should have collected far more ores than those present in the room.

"I did collect quite a lot, but most of them have gone to Sun Jin laoshi as tuition fee. He has taught me ever since I was young, imparting me much valuable knowledge. Even though I was still unable to become a blacksmith in the end, I am still deeply indebted to him. It is only right that I pay tuition fee to him." the middle-aged man replied.

"Tuition fee?" I see, I finally get it!" Having finally made sense of the entire story, a chilling glint flashed across Zhang Xuan's eyes. In that instant, his face turned terrifyingly cold.

# Chapter 1021: The Despicable Sun Jin

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After hearing those words, Zhang Xuan confirmed that that Blacksmith Sun Jin whom the other party spoke of had never intended to take the middle-aged man as his disciple in the first place. From the start to the end, that Sun Jin fellow had only regarded the other party as a mere tool for procuring ores!

In the gaps between the tectonic plates, valuable ores were usually produced alongside earth flames. As such, in places where earth flames could be found, there were bound to be plenty of valuable ores as well.

That Sun Jin fellow had intentionally made the middle-aged man cultivate a zhenqi that was at odds with the earth flames, thus making it easier for the other party to sense areas rich in earth flames. But cultivating such a cultivation technique meant that the latter would be unable to control the earth flames, making it impossible to smith!

In other words, Sun Jin had never intended to allow the middle-aged man to become a blacksmith!

Working as a blacksmith might have been lucrative, but selling those ores was even more so!

For a teacher to commit such an atrocity... Zhang Xuan was enraged.

It was one thing if he had never encountered it, but now that he had, there was no way he could let the other party off!

Black sheep like this had to be weeded from society!

Even though the other party wasn't a master teacher, he had assumed the name of a teacher to intentionally misguide others. This was completely unacceptable!

The thirty apprentices who had come under Sun Jin's tutelage alongside the middle-aged man had thought that they could rise to



glory with a great 6-star blacksmith teaching them personally. Yet, due to Sun Jin's misguidance, their dreams had been shattered. Most of them had ended up dying while searching for ores for him, and even the fortunate survivor had ended up ending his life from the sheer despair of being unable to become a blacksmith.

To Sun Jin, they were probably just disposable pawns. As mere apprentices, they weren't qualified to learn his true teachings. Thus, their inability to become blacksmiths didn't harm his reputation by too much. On the contrary, the others might even think that it was those apprentices who were lazy and incapable, being unable to achieve anything despite coming under the tutelage of an esteemed 6-star pinnacle blacksmith.

Most likely, it was such overwhelming criticism that eventually pushed the middle-aged man to take the final step.

Had Zhang Xuan not heard of it himself, he would never have dared believe that there could be such a contemptible individual in the Firesource City Blacksmith Guild.

Those who imparted their teachings and dispelled the doubts of others were granted the noble title 'teacher'.

As an esteemed blacksmith, an Upper Nine Paths occupation, if Sun Jin had attempted to search for mercenaries to gather ores for him, he would surely have been able to do so easily. Just that, being found doing so could possibly sully his reputation, and the profits he stood to earn would be significantly lower as well. Whereas, by accepting a few apprentices and pretending to be a teacher to them, their act of gathering ores for him could be justified as filial piety, allowing him to take them for free without suffering the condemnation of others. On top of that, he could also conveniently toss them aside once he was done with them, and this was indeed what he had done.

"Despite studying under a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith for so many years, I am still unable to smith even the most basic Mortal

weapon. No matter where I go, I am viewed with disdain by others, such that even my family members were mocked due to my incompetence. If all my existence does is bring shame to others, I might as well end my life right here, right now!" Seeing the elder before him fall into deep contemplation, the middle-aged man thought that the other party wasn't able to find a solution to his problem as well, and disappointment crept into his eyes.

It was one thing if he was the only one being mocked, but for his family members to have to face mockery from the public due to him... this was something that he couldn't accept!

Seeing that the middle-aged man had lost all fighting will within him, Zhang Xuan shook his head and consoled him. "There's no need to get so downhearted. I have already identified the root problem as to why you are unable to smith. As long as you trust me, I will help you resolve your problem. Not only so, I will help you advance to become a 5-star or even a 6-star blacksmith!"

But as much as those words were consolation, they weren't lies. He did possess the ability to do so.

It might have been difficult for others to alter a cultivation technique, but with the sharp eye of discernment and vast knowledge that Zhang Xuan possessed, creating a new cultivation technique to resolve the flaws of the current one that the other party was cultivating wasn't entirely impossible.

Of course, Zhang Xuan had to first find out what kind of cultivation technique the middle-aged man was cultivating first.

Zhang Xuan had used his Eye of Insight to carefully assess the middle-aged man when he smithed earlier, and it seemed like the cultivation technique that the other party had been taught was incomplete. As the information he received he wasn't complete, he had to obtain the full copy so as to ensure that nothing would go wrong.

"Become a 5-star or 6-star blacksmith?" The middle-aged man

was stunned for a moment after hearing those words before shaking his head, and the disappointment in his eyes deepened further.

He had thought that, considering the immense capability that the elder before him had displayed, the other party might have had a way to resolve his problem. Yet, who could have known that the other party would end up spouting such nonsense?

A person who was incapable of even smithing the most basic Mortal-tier weapon, how could he possibly ever become a 5-star or even 6-star blacksmith?

Wasn't this a mere daydream?

The middle-aged man turned his gaze toward Zhang Xuan and spoke with an immensely weak and bitter voice. "Do you find my plight very hilarious? Are you here to make a mockery of me before I end my life?"

"Make a mockery of you?"

Zhang Xuan hadn't expected to hear such words from the other party's mouth, and he was dumbfounded for a moment. However, it didn't take him long to understand the rationale behind the other party's words.

To tell a man who had failed the 1-star blacksmith examination for twenty-four years straight that he could become a 5-star or 6-star blacksmith, it was no wonder the other party would think that he was mocking him.

Without explaining anything, Zhang Xuan spoke with a confident smile on his face. "Don't worry, I don't have the habit of making empty promises. I mean what I say."

If it still didn't work out at the end, he could always just destroy the other party's cultivation and impart a simplified version of the Heaven's Path Divine Art to him. Even though the middle-aged man was at Transcendent Mortal 9-dan, even if he started

cultivating from scratch, it wouldn't take too long.

"You mean what you say? A feat that even Sun Jin laoshi is unable to achieve, how do you expect me to believe you? Are you really a blacksmith?" A hint of doubt surfaced in the middle-aged man's eyes.

Any blacksmith would understand the difficulties in advancing through the ranks, and yet, the other party spoke of reaching 5-star and 6-star as if it was a mere walk in the park. Wasn't that clearly boasting?

"Of course!" Flicking his wrist, Zhang Xuan took out his blacksmith emblem, and six brilliant stars shone brightly on it.

"You are a... 6-star blacksmith?"

The middle-aged man was stunned to see the emblem, but a moment later, he shook his head and said, "I don't believe you. There is a chance that the emblem might belong to someone else, or it might even be a fake altogether. Unless you smith... a Spirit pinnacle weapon before my eyes, you won't be able to convince me that you are a 6-star blacksmith!"

It was inevitable that the middle-aged man would be skeptical of Zhang Xuan. All of the 6-star blacksmiths he had encountered were at least in their fifties, so it was hard for him to even fathom that a young man in his twenties could possibly reach such a height.

"This..." Zhang Xuan was slightly stunned by the other party's sudden request.

He had received his blacksmith emblem fair and square through an examination at the Master Teacher Academy. Naturally, it was nothing much for him to show his ability to the other party.

What he had to do now was to win the other party's trust first. Otherwise, if the other party were to insist on ending his life, there would be nothing he could do.

"Why? You aren't able to smith anything at all? So, the words

you have said are all lies to console me?" Noting Zhang Xuan's hesitation, the eyes of the middle-aged man turned despondent.

"Of course not, smithing a weapon means nothing to me!" Seeing that he could very well lose the other party's trust if he didn't show his ability, Zhang Xuan replied with a slight smile and stepped forward.

"Allow me to use your ores!"

Saying that, Zhang Xuan walked up to the rack by the wall and casually selected four different ores before tossing them into the cauldron not too far away.

After which, he drove his zhenqi, and the earth flames immediately surged up, scorching the four ores crimson. In just a moment, they began melting. The impurities contained within the ore were burned away, leaving behind the refined metal glowing brilliantly within the cauldron.

The four ores were extremely rare commodities in the world, each of them worth a fortune. Probably, only in a place like Firesource City could one take out all four of them so easily.

Through skillfully maneuvering his zhenqi, Zhang Xuan slowly pushed the four ores together, fusing them. As he did so, he turned to the middle-aged man with a slight smile on his face and said, "The easiest segment in smithing a weapon is the forging 1 phase. This phase happens to be the most time-consuming as well, so I will just skip that."

As he spoke, Zhang Xuan gathered zhenqi at the tips of his finger and abruptly shot it into the searing earth flames. The freshly fused alloy flew out of the cauldron and into a quench 2 bath not too far away.

Tzzzzzzzz!

Smoke puffed into the air.

Shortly after, Zhang Xuan raised his hand and grasped; a huge

lump of metal appeared before his eyes.

"This is... a weapon?" Looking at the metal lump, the middle-aged man's lips twitched uncontrollably.

Putting aside mere apprentices, even a pig could probably forge something way better than that.

With a bizarre look on his face, the middle-aged man casually took the weapon, intrigued by the monstrosity that the other party had smithed. The next moment, however, his eyes narrowed in astonishment.

His proficiency in smithing wasn't too high, but having pursued a 6-star blacksmith for more than twenty years, he still possessed a decent eye for weapons.

As ugly and revolting as the metal lump looked, there was no doubt that it was a Spirit pinnacle weapon.

To casually pick up a few ores and forge a Spirit pinnacle weapon within less than a minute... What kind of frightening ability was this?

If he could smith such a powerful weapon without paying any heed to the meticulous details, once he got serious... what kind of formidable weapons would he be able to smith?

"I apologize for doubting you!" The middle-aged man hurried forward and kneeled onto the floor.

At this moment, he felt nothing but awe and respect for the other party!

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Even though he was a real 6-star pinnacle blacksmith through and through, his ability was limited to only refining the ores and quenching. As for the most basic forging... it was regrettable, but he knew nothing about it at all.

As a result, all he could forge at the moment were metal lumps.

Anything more complicated than that was beyond his capability.

Nevertheless, that was more than sufficient for him to gain the other party's trust.

Seeing that he had won the other party's unreserved trust, Zhang Xuan said, "Alright. Now that I have verified my identity to you, you should be willing to listen to my instructions now, right? If it works out, not only will you become a full-fledged blacksmith, the facade of a certain hypocrite will be unmasked as well!"

"The facade of a certain hypocrite will be unmasked?" The middle-aged man couldn't comprehend the nuance of these words.

"Indeed." Zhang Xuan nodded. "May I know where the Blacksmith Sun Jin you spoke of is the moment?"

"He... He should be at the Blacksmith Guild," the middle-aged man replied.

"Bring me to him. Later on, regardless of what I say or do, I want you to remain silent by the side. Don't interject, and act only on my command," Zhang Xuan instructed.

As the principal of a Master Teacher Academy, he couldn't allow poisonous tumors like Sun Jin to continue their tyranny. He had to expose the other party's misdeeds publicly, or else who knew how many more people would end up in the same pitiful plight as the middle-aged man before him?

On top of protecting humanity, master teachers had the duty to protect the sanctity of teaching. The solemnity of lineages mustn't be undermined by a couple of black sheep in society!

"Yes!" The middle-aged man nodded.

Just as the other party had said, as a person who was already prepared to die, what else did he have to fear? Perhaps, just perhaps... if the young man before him really could bring a miracle to him and resolve his problem, he could finally be freed from the abyss of despair that he had been gradually sinking deeper and

deeper into over the years.

Just as Zhang Xuan was about to walk out of the room, he suddenly halted and pointed toward the Violetgilt Metal on the rack.

"Bring this ore with us. We will use it later!"

The middle-aged man nodded and stowed it in his storage ring before leading the way to the Blacksmith Guild.

With the Blacksmith Guild located just three streets away, it didn't take the duo too long to arrive at their destination.

Darkness had already set upon the sky of Firesource City, but as the base of operations for the most popular occupation in the city, the Blacksmith Guild was still brightly-lit, and huge crowds walked in and out of its entrance.



# Chapter 1022: Causing Trouble

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When they reached the guild's entrance, the middle-aged man fell silent for a brief moment before saying, "Sun Jin laoshi is one of the most capable blacksmiths in the guild, and he has many disciples and followers. As a mere apprentice, an evicted one at that, I have no right to bring you to him."

Due to the rich earth flames around Firesource City, blacksmiths and apothecaries were particularly respected in the region. In a sense, they could be considered nobles there, existences whom the average civilians could never hope to make an appointment with. This was especially so for a blacksmith of Sun Jin's caliber.

"You have no right? Don't worry, I will bring you right to him!" Harrumphing coldly, Zhang Xuan swiftly uncovered Sun Jin's location before leading the way over.

The Firesource City Blacksmith Guild was bustling. The main hall was packed with sellers and buyers of weapons alike. 1-star and 2-star blacksmiths were serving as attendants in the area, attending to the customers and bringing about order to the crowd.

After walking for a while, they soon arrived before a relatively vast room. Just as they were about to make their way in, two 4-star blacksmiths walked up to them, and upon recognizing the middle-aged man following behind Zhang Xuan, they sneered coldly.

"I was just wondering who this is. Isn't this our great Song Zhen, who still remains as an apprentice even after twenty long years? What? Are you unwilling to give up, so you wish to give it another try?"

"It doesn't matter. No matter how many times you take the examination, trash is trash; you can't change your nature regardless of how much you try!"

Disdainful smiles were plastered on the faces of the duo. Clearly,

they were well aware of the affairs surrounding the middle-aged man.

"I..." Hearing the sneers, the face of the middle-aged man, Song Zhen, paled. He opened his mouth to speak, but eventually, he closed it without saying a word.

"Alright, you should stop making a fool out of yourself here and scram. Our teacher has no intention of meeting you, so it doesn't matter how many times you come here!" One of the two 4-star blacksmiths waved his hands impatiently.

Song Zhen was about to explain the situation when Zhang Xuan suddenly raised his hand, stopping him. After which, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze toward the duo and said, "He isn't the one who wants to meet your teacher; it's me. Get Sun Jin out here to receive me!"

"You want our teacher to receive you? Who do you think you are?" Hearing the arrogant words spoken by the young man before him, one of the 4-star blacksmiths guarding the door harrumphed coldly, the disdain in his eyes reflected clearly for all to see.

Given his teacher's standing, even the city lord of Firesource City had to submit a visiting scroll in advance before paying a visit. Yet, this twenty-year-old fellow actually dared to speak such haughty words, wanting his teacher to receive him. The ignorant sure were fearless!

"I will give you three counts to get out of my way, or else I will toss you out myself!" The other blacksmith threatened menacingly.

Seeing that the duo wasn't planning on letting him enter, Zhang Xuan shook his head and said, "Since he has no intentions on receiving me, it seems like I will just have to go in by myself."

Right after saying those words, Zhang Xuan turned his eyes away from the duo and began making his way into the room.

As the principal of the Master Teacher Academy, not even a 7-

star master teacher would dare to keep him waiting outside.

Seeing that the young man was trying to barge in forcefully, the faces of the two 4-star blacksmiths warped in astonishment.

"Audacious! What are you trying to do?"

They hurried forward to block the young man's path as they raised their palm, prepared to make a move.

However, before they could launch their strike, an overwhelming might crashed down upon them.

Peng peng!

The duo was knocked flying simultaneously before crashing heavily into the wall. Their faces reddened, and fresh blood spewed from their mouths.

With just a look, Zhang Xuan could tell that this wasn't the first time that the two 4-star blacksmiths had oppressed others. Toward such people, he had no intention on holding back at all. With a simple exertion of his zhenqi, the duo was already severely wounded.

The two of them were only at Cosmos Bridge realm, so it was only natural that they wouldn't even be able to withstand a simple exertion of zhenqi from Zhang Xuan.

Struggling to his feet, one of the 4-star blacksmiths exclaimed, "Someone is trying to barge in forcefully!"

His voice was very loud, and it swiftly resounded through the main hall of the Blacksmith Guild.

"Someone is trying to barge in? What is going on?"

Countless pairs of eyes turned toward them.

However, Zhang Xuan paid those curious gazes no heed at all, proceeding in with an impassive look on his face.

Song Zhen had thought that the other party was paying a visit to

the Blacksmith Guild to find a solution to his problem, but who could have known that the other party would forcefully barge in in such a manner? Horrified, he couldn't help but cower in fear. However, after a moment of hesitation, he clenched his jaws in determination and decided to follow behind the other party.

No matter what, it was apparent that the other party was doing it for him, so how could he back away at this moment?

On the other hand, noting that Song Zhen had decided to follow behind him, Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction.

Even though he was determined on bringing judgement upon Sun Jin today, it could pose some trouble to him should Song Zhen choose to back down at this crucial moment.

"Trying to barge into our Blacksmith Guild? You are seeking death!"

"Quick, stop that fellow!"

Hearing the shouting from the 4-star blacksmith, seven middle-aged men within the room hurried forward to surround Zhang Xuan.

Dressed in their blacksmith robes, there were either four or five gleaming stars on the emblems pinned in front of their chests, indicating their ranks. Without any hesitation, they drew their weapons and launched an assault at the two intruders.

As the occupation that was second only to master teachers in Firesource City, blacksmiths had their pride and dignity to uphold. Any action that undermined the prestige of the Blacksmith Guild had to be dealt with sternly to show others that blacksmiths weren't to be trifled with. Thus, upon hearing that someone was forcefully barging into the Blacksmith Guild, their first thought was to apprehend the other party before anything else.

Seeing the seven middle-aged man assaulting him without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan sneered coldly, "Noisy!"

Without even shooting them a glance, Zhang Xuan placed his hands behind his back and continued walking forward.

Peng peng peng peng!

The crowd who had rushed forward to attack him were all knocked back. The stronger the attack was, the more forceful the counterattack against them was. Under the immense impact, their faces paled, and blood spurted from their mouths.

As 5-star blacksmiths, their cultivation had already reached Transcendent Mortal 8-dan or 9-dan. Yet, despite their strength, they had still been sent flying just like that, as if saying that they weren't even qualified to be considered an opponent to Zhang Xuan.

Seeing the entire sight from behind, Song Zhen's face paled in astonishment, and his body began trembling.

Back when the other party flicked away the sword in his hand, he had already known that the other party was a powerful expert. However, he didn't think that the other party would be so fearsome!

The strongest expert he had met ever since he was young was the guild leader of the Blacksmith Guild. Yet, to his shock, he realized that the young man before him seemed to be even stronger than the guild leader of the Blacksmith Guild!

"Quick, someone is trying to barge in..."

Hualala!

Right after the seven of them fell to the ground, another group of men rushed in. They were all 5-star blacksmiths as well, and as soon as they entered the room, they immediately launched a torrent of attacks toward Zhang Xuan. However, just like before, the attacks were completely ineffective. A moment later, they were left lying on the ground as well.

After striking down three waves of guards, the duo finally

arrived at the lounge.

"Song Zhen, what do you mean by this?" Right after stepping into the lounge, they saw an old man glancing over in their direction with fury blazing in his eyes.

There were two 6-star blacksmiths standing beside the old man.

"I..." Upon seeing the old man, Song Zhen's face paled. As if the other party's authority had been marked deep into his bones, he found himself unable to speak a word at all.

"We don't mean anything much; we are just here to ask if you manage to sleep well at night. You filled your apprentices with hope, only to usher them toward despair. Don't you feel the slightest guilt within you?" Zhang Xuan walked straight toward the main seat in the lounge before turning a heavy gaze toward the old man.

The old man's cheeks twitched slightly, and with a face livid with rage, he bellowed, "Who are you? This is the Blacksmith Guild, not a place where you can fool around!"

"Fool around?" Zhang Xuan shook his head with a wry smile before turning a sharp gaze toward the old man. "I am here to return justice to Song Zhen!"

One of the 6-star blacksmiths standing beside the old man stepped forward and sneered coldly. "Return justice to Song Zhen? What justice does he need? Despite studying under Sun Jin laoshi for more than twenty years, he hasn't even managed to clear his 1-star blacksmith examination yet. What justice does that trash need? It's only because of Sun Jin laoshi's magnanimity that he was allowed to remain here for so long. Otherwise, the Blacksmith Guild would have long chased scum like him out of its doors!"

The 6-star blacksmith seemed to be in his early forties, and he possessed a cultivation of Nascent Saint as well. The gaze that he directed toward Song Zhen was filled with mockery and disgust.

"I am talking to Sun Jin, who do you think you are to interject in our conversation?" Zhang Xuan's face darkened. "Kneel down!"

Kacha!

All of a sudden, the 6-star blacksmith felt an immense might crushing down on him. Without any time to react at all, his knees caved him, leaving him kneeling helplessly on the ground.

"How dare you cause trouble here? Who in the world gave you the guts to do so?" Seeing his companion being forced to kneel on the ground, the other 6-star blacksmith flew into a rage. Bellowing furiously, he whipped out a sword and charged right toward Zhang Xuan.

As the sword pierced through the air, a freezing gust of wind seemed to permeate the entire room. Even though the 6-star blacksmith only possessed a cultivation of Saint 1-dan primary stage, the sword in his hand had reached the level of Spirit pinnacle!

Through the augmentation of his sword, even a Saint 1-dan intermediate cultivator would find it hard to stand against him.

Facing the other party's ferocious assault, Zhang Xuan flicked his finger casually, and the sword immediately flew out of the other party's hand. In the next moment, the sword flew into his hands, and with a resounding 'ding!', the sword had acknowledged its new master.

Pu!

Seeing his personal weapon taking another man as its master, the face of the 6-star blacksmith turned ghastly pale, as if he had seen a ghost. Stifled by the sight he had just seen, a huge mouthful of blood spurted from his mouth.

"Who in the world are you?" Seeing how the young man was able to incapacitate one of his students with a word and have a Spirit pinnacle weapon acknowledge him as its master with a flick of his

finger, Sun Jin's face finally turned grave.

"Like I said, I am here to return justice for Song Zhen." Zhang Xuan turned his cold gaze toward Sun Jin. "Do I really need to point it out explicitly to you?"

"I have taught Song Zhen for more than twenty years, and yet, he still wasn't able to become a 1-star blacksmith. What business is it of mine that his talent is mediocre?" Sun Jin spat through gritted teeth.

"You are saying that it has nothing to do with you?" Picking his ear leisurely, a look of disappointment surfaced on Zhang Xuan's face. "I don't like to hear those words. Tell me the truth."

"You..." Seeing that the other party wasn't about to let the matter rest easily, veins began popping out of Sun Jin's temper. With a frown of displeasure, he harrumphed. "What I said is the truth. There is nothing I can do about his lack of talent. If you don't believe me, you can ask Song Zhen about the matter yourself. A person who can't even smith a Mortal-tier weapon, what can I possibly do to help him?"

"It seems like speaking the truth is something very difficult for you. Since that's the case, why don't I share something with you? Perhaps it might help you jot your memory..."

Gazing deeply at Sun Jin, Zhang Xuan said calmly, "The cultivation technique he practices is suited for finding ores, but it happens to be in conflict with earth flames, thus making it impossible for him to smith. Can you tell me what is going on here?"

"This..." Sun Jin was astonished to hear those words, but he didn't allow it to show on his face. Nevertheless, his fists couldn't help but clench tightly behind his back. "He is just an ordinary apprentice; how would I know what kind of cultivation technique he practices? Do you expect a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith like me to bother myself with even the cultivation technique of a mere



apprentice?"

"You..." Those words seemed to have triggered an explosion in Song Zhen's face. With a face scarlet with agitation, he exclaimed, "But you were the one who imparted my cultivation technique to me! You even offered me many pointers so as to ensure that I wouldn't err... How can you possibly be unaware of it!"

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# Chapter 1023: Twisted

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The cultivation technique that he practiced had been personally taught to him by Sun Jin. Every time he met with a problem in his cultivation, Sun Jin would always step in personally to guide him. This was also the reason he was extremely grateful to the other party, and he felt deeply guilty that he had brought shame to the other party's name. That was also one of the major contributing reasons he had eventually decided to end his life.

Yet, why was the other party denying it now?

"Nonsense!" Sun Jin flung his sleeves and harrumphed coldly. "You aren't my direct disciple or even my student, you are just a mere apprentice. Who do you think you are for me to impart a cultivation technique to you and even personally guide you along?"

"I..." Song Zhen's body shook in disbelief.

He wanted to scream that what he had said was the truth and that he wasn't lying. Yet, he wasn't able to find any way to refute the other party's words at all.

Back then, when he first learnt that cultivation technique, the other party had told him that it was a very formidable technique and that others might attempt to lay their hands on it should they learn of its existence. As such, he had hidden the nature of his cultivation technique very well for the past twenty-four years. Who could have known that it was a trap laid by the other party from the very start? At this point, there was no way he could explain it anymore.

After all, given his identity, it was indeed irrational to think that a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith would devote time to guiding him personally.

"I have taught you for more than twenty years, and this is how you return my kindness? To actually bring someone over to injure

my disciples... Song Zhen, I must have been blind to have taken you in back then!" Sun Jin bellowed furiously.

"You are going overboard with your acting." Seeing how the other party's disposition was growing stronger and stronger with each word spoken, as if he was the one who had the moral high ground, Zhang Xuan tapped his finger on the table beside him impatiently. "Since you are unwilling to speak the truth, I guess I'll just have to find some other way to get it out of you."

After saying that, Zhang Xuan flicked his finger.

Peng!

As if struck by a sudden streak of lightning, Sun Jin's figure retreated swiftly into the distance before coughing violently on the ground, and fresh blood spouted from his mouth.

"You..." Not expecting the other party to make a move against him, overpowering him with a mere strike of his finger, Sun Jin's body trembled in disbelief.

Arrogant! The other party was too arrogant!

This was the Blacksmith Guild they were in!

To barge in and attack him fearlessly, did the other party think that the Blacksmith Guild was just for show?

Wiping his finger on his sleeve, as if disgusted by how dirty it was, Zhang Xuan gazed down coldly upon the fallen Sun Jin. "How about it now? Do you recall anything yet?"

"You..." Sun Jin clenched his jaws tightly as his face flushed crimson. Knowing that he couldn't admit to the matter at any cost, he bellowed back, "All that I have said is the truth!"

"The truth?"

"That's right! He's just a mere apprentice, a person who hasn't even qualified as a 1-star blacksmith yet. How can he be qualified to have me lie for him?" At this point, a look of savagery surfaced in

Sun Jin's eyes as he roared, "And you! Regardless of who you are, to dare to act so arrogantly in the Blacksmith Guild, I have to say, you are a goner!"

Had Zhang Xuan not known about Song Zhen's affairs in advance, he might very well have fallen for Sun Jin's act. However, having learned of the atrocities that Sun Jin had committed over the years, he didn't have the slightest shred of pity for the other party. Shaking his head in disappointment, he said, "It seems like you are unwilling to speak after all!"

To be honest, Sun Jin was indeed a very crafty person. Knowing that he would be severely punished if he were to be caught misguiding his apprentice, he had prepared in advance so as to absolve himself of any blame.

As long as he refused to admit that he had taught Song Zhen his cultivation technique, there was no one who would be able to do anything to him.

After all, the previous batch of apprentices whom he had imparted the cultivation technique to had nearly died out. There was nothing that the other party could possibly find to utilize against him.

But while such a mean might be effective in fooling others, there was no way it would work on Zhang Xuan.

If he really wanted the other party to speak, he could easily find several dozen methods to do so.

The only reason he hadn't done so was give the other party an opportunity.

"What I am saying is the truth," Sun Jin insisted adamantly, but before he could finish his words, he felt another aching sensation at his chest, and he was sent flying once more. The injuries he had sustained this time around was even more severe; it felt as if something had mashed his internal organs together. He lay weakly

on the ground, unable to get back up.

"How is it? You still can't remember?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"It will make no difference even if you kill me. If you dare kill me, you will definitely be chased to the end of the world by the Blacksmith Guild," Sun Jin roared angrily.

He knew deeply that he couldn't admit to it. The moment that he did so, he could very well be sentenced to death by the guild. On the other hand, if he were to deny it vehemently, there would be nothing the other party could do, having no evidence on hand.

"Since you desire to die, allow me to grant your wish!"

Zhang Xuan flicked his finger once more, and a surge of sword qi flew toward Sun Jin.

"Hold it right there!" At this instant, a loud bellow sounded, and three white-bearded elders entered the room. Upon seeing the surge of sword qi, they hurriedly rushed forward to deflect it.

Dressed in conventional blacksmith robes, there was an emblem with six gleaming stars pinned on the chests of each of the three elders. With the three of them making a move simultaneously, a powerful might reminiscent of the relentless currents of a river burst forth.

Boom!

The two forces collided, cancelling one another out.

The eyebrows of one of the elders shot up, and a powerful air of authority exuded from him. Stepping forward, he glared at Zhang Xuan with wrathful eyes.

"This friend over here, to barge in here and severely wound one of my elders, are you belittling us, or does the Blacksmith Guild mean nothing to you?"

Upon seeing the elder, Song Zhen hurriedly sent a telepathic message to Zhang Xuan. "H-he is Guild Leader Zhong..."

"Guild Leader Zhong?"

"Un, Guild Leader Zhong Mingchun. He is a Saint 1-dan pinnacle expert, as well as a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith. His strength is even superior to the head of the Master Teacher Pavilion, and it is no joke to say that he is the strongest expert of our Firesource City," Song Zhen explained anxiously.

Due to its unique geographical terrain, the Blacksmith Guild and Apothecary Guild had developed to become far more prosperous and stronger than the other occupations. As a result, the head of the Blacksmith Guild was even stronger than the head of the Master Teacher Pavilion.

Now that an expert of Guild Leader Zhong's caliber had gotten involved in this matter as well... how were they to resolve this issue?

Before Zhang Xuan could say a word, Sun Jin had already climbed to his feet and exclaimed furiously, "Guild Leader Zhong, save me! He actually dared to make a move against me. This is completely preposterous; he does not care about the law at all. A person like him must be killed, and his corpse must be incinerated with the earth flames so as to serve as a warning to others."

"I am a blacksmith myself, so naturally, I have no thoughts of belittling the Blacksmith Guild!" Paying no heed to Sun Jin, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and took out his 6-star blacksmith emblem.

"You are a 6-star blacksmith?"

Upon seeing the emblem, Guild Leader Zhong frowned. A moment later, he spoke with a grim voice. "Even if you are a 6-star blacksmith, any grudges you have with Sun Jin should be resolved through the headquarters. If you had applied for a Life-and-Death Duel beforehand, there would have been nothing that we could have said about the situation. However, to barge into our guild and harm one of our men, there is no way you are getting out of here alive today. Set up the formation!"

Right after saying those words, Guild Leader Zhong waved his hand.

Hualala!

The two elders beside him immediately rushed into their positions, forming a unique formation around Zhang Xuan.

"I have already told you my identity. As the guild leader, instead of investigating the situation, you chose to set up a formation to deal with me instead. Don't you think that you are being a little too hasty here?"

He had already revealed his identity as a 6-star blacksmith, and yet, the other party still unhesitatingly chose to make a move against him. After all of the talk about rules and order, the other party was still siding with his own men!

"Take down that insolent fellow first before we talk about the matter!" Ignoring Zhang Xuan's words, Guild Leader Zhong bellowed furiously before raising his palm and charging forward.

Hong long!

As Guild Leader Zhong made his move, the other two elders also raised their palms. The three surges of zhenqi formed a unique formation that shrouded the entire lounge.

Under the effects of the formation, the three of them could transmit their powers to one another freely, allowing them to practically double the strength of an individual among them in an instant. Guild Leader Zhong might only have been at Saint 1-dan pinnacle a moment ago, but with the other two elders infusing their strength into him, he had gained the power to face even a Saint 2-dan primary stage cultivator face-on.

Taking a glance at the formation, Zhang Xuan shook his head. "Three Stars Violetmoon Formation?"

As a 6-star pinnacle formation master, he saw through the other party's seemingly profound formation with a single glance.

The Three Stars Violetmoon Formation had been created by a Saint realm formation master two thousand years ago. Requiring three men for it, the formation served to create a remote connection between the trio, allowing them to put their strength together and exert a might far greater than a normal collaboration among them.

For Guild Leader Zhong and the two elders to go all out and utilize such a formation right from the start, they must have felt threatened by his strength.

"If you know of the formation, you would do well to raise your hands and surrender peacefully. Perhaps, I can consider sparing you this once. Otherwise, today shall be the day of your death!"

Zhenqi rumbled in Guild Leader Zhong's palm, threatening to burst forth at any moment.

"Day of my death?" Zhang Xuan shook his head, his face reflecting the deep disappointment he had in the other party. "Despite serving as the guild leader, you are unaware of the atrocities committed by your own subordinate, allowing him to bring harm upon many budding blacksmiths. Not only so, you jump swiftly to conclusions, choosing to turn against me to protect your own subordinate without investigating the matter. It seems like it's about time to clean up the Firesource City Blacksmith Guild!"

Even if Guild Leader Zhong wasn't able to see through the anomaly in Song Zhen's cultivation technique in a glance like Zhang Xuan had, he should have at least noticed or heard something about the huge reserve of ores that Sun Jin had amassed over the years. That should have been enough to send warning bells ringing in Guild Leader Zhong's mind to investigate the matter!

Regardless of whether Guild Leader Zhong was intentionally covering for Song Zhen or hadn't noticed it in the first place, there



was one thing that was certain—he had seriously failed in his responsibilities as a guild leader, and he had to be punished for that.

"We can talk about that once you survive our attack!"

On the other hand, seeing how the other party was uttering such big words even when death was imminent for him, Guild Leader Zhong harrumphed coldly. Stepping forward, a powerful aura reminiscent of an imposing dragon burst forth from him, and a huge congregation of energy exploded out.

Boom!

That huge congregation of energy swiftly warped into a massive sword as it bolted toward Zhang Xuan with unbelievable speed.

Song Zhen's face paled in fright, and he exclaimed anxiously, "Be careful!"

The might gathered within the massive sword felt so great that it seemed as if it could even split the world in two. Not even a Saint 2-dan expert could possibly stand against such immense force.

It was for his sake that the other party had come here. If the other party were to be killed because of him, he would feel guilt-ridden for life.

Clenching his jaws in determination, Song Zhen was just about to charge forward to take the attack in Zhang Xuan's stead when the other party abruptly grabbed the teacup on the table beside him and poured its contents forward.

Weng!

The next instant, the massive sword of zhenqi abruptly swerved upward.

Boom!

The sword tore through the roof, leaving debris and dust scattering all around the lounge.

He actually deflected that attack with a single cup of tea? This... Unable to believe his eyes, Song Zhen rubbed his eyes forcefully, seemingly trying to check if he was dreaming.

The trio had brought out the might of the Three Stars Violetmoon Formation perfectly, such that even Saint 2-dan experts would have had no choice but to flee before that overwhelming strength. Yet, that fellow had actually deflected that powerful attack with just a cup of tea? Just how in the world did he manage to do it?

As much as Song Zhen was astonished, Guild Leader Zhong and the others were flabbergasted by the ludicrous sight before them as well.

To redirect the might of their formation with just a cup of tea, that was something that had exceeded the scope of their imagination. Inconceivable!

"There is something bizarre about that fellow. Let's use our strongest move!" Guild Leader Zhong roared furiously.

In the next instant, the three elders drew their swords. Three chilling gleams flashed through the air, heading right for Zhang Xuan.

This is bad.

Upon seeing Guild Leader Zhong and the other two elders drawing their swords, Song Zhen's face turned as pale as a sheet of paper. It was apparent that Guild Leader Zhong and the others were enraged, and they were planning to kill Zhang Xuan! He hurriedly turned his gaze toward Zhang Xuan anxiously, only to see the latter frowning in displeasure.

"Are you done yet?"

After saying those words, he stood up and lifted the chair beneath him with a single hand before walking forward with widened strides.

A chair...? Seeing Zhang Xuan's actions, Song Zhen nearly spurted a mouthful of blood.

Of your three opponents, two are wielding Spirit pinnacle swords and the last one has a Half-Saint sword in hand. Yet... you are going to face them with just a chair? Do you think that this is a street fight?

How in the world do you expect to win with such a weapon in hand?

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# Chapter 1024: You Are Principal Zhang?

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Not only was Song Zhen frenzied by the sight before him, the mouths of Guild Leader Zhong and the others were also twitching uncontrollably, and they felt as if their minds were about to blow at that sight.

It was indeed true that the chairs of their Blacksmith Guild were extremely expensive commodities, made out of superior materials, but even so... it was still just wood! Perhaps it might have been a decent weapon in a street fight against ordinary humans, but to use it to deal with their Three Stars Violetmoon Formation was a blatant insult to them!

Gritting his teeth tightly, Guild Leader Zhong harrumphed coldly. "Since you are courting death, don't blame us when you get hurt!"

Flicking his wrist forcefully, a sword qi reminiscent of a relentless waterfall flowed forth.

Huala!

In the blink of an eye, Guild Leader Zhong had already executed his strongest sword art.

Half-Saint battle technique... Knots of a Thousand Threads!

'As if two interweaved webs, a thousand knots there are in my heart!' 1

This battle technique was created by a lovesick swordmaster a thousand years ago. The main aim of the sword qi lay not in killing but coiling. Once struck by this technique, one would feel as if one had fallen into a marsh, unable to struggle free.

With Guild Leader Zhong's current strength, complemented by the effects of the formation, not even a Saint 2-dan intermediate stage cultivator would be able to deal with it easily. It seemed like he was aware that ordinary means wouldn't be effective on the

other party, considering the other party's extraordinary strength and deep comprehension of formations. As such, he had decided to use his strongest means in the hope of taking down the other party swiftly.

Hula!

The sword qi swiftly formed circle after circle. Once trapped within, even the most formidable of experts would have to suffer a fair bit to break free. Yet, the young man before him didn't seem to be aware of the danger ahead of him. Holding the leg of the chair, he continued proceeding forward fearlessly.

"You came!" Guild Leader Zhong sneered.

Tzzzz!

With a skillful flick of his sword, the sword qi instantaneously surrounded Zhang Xuan.

I succeeded? Guild Leader Zhong nearly leaped up in excitement.

He had only intended to use this technique to harass the other party, hoping to uncover the full extent of the other party's strength through it. Yet, who knew that he would successfully coil his sword qi around the other party so easily?

So far, he had never encountered a cultivator who could break free from his Knots of a Thousand Threads before!

Delighted, Guild Leader Zhong had just started thinking about how he should deal with the other party when the person who should have been trapped within his Knots of a Thousand Threads abruptly vanished, causing his sword qi to end up coiling around nothing. The next moment, the other party abruptly appeared right before him, and the blunt, squarish edges of the wooden chair came crashing down forcefully on his head.

"I..." Guild Leader Zhong's body stiffened. Before he could make sense of what had just happened, a sharp pain abruptly assaulted his face.

Peng peng peng peng!

Despite the weak material used to make the chair, it had been reinforced by the other party's zhenqi, making it as tough as steel. In the blink of an eye, his face was already completely soaked in blood.

"Wait a moment..." The other two 6-star blacksmiths who had been fighting alongside Guild Leader Zhong were also frenzied by the sight before them.

They had gone to the extent of utilizing a collaborative formation along with their strongest attack, and yet, they had still ended up being pummeled by the other party. More importantly... it was one thing if the other party had wielded a powerful weapon, but he was only equipped with the chair he had been sitting down on a moment ago! Just the thought of the current situation left them feeling so stifled that they could spurt blood.

It was not much of an issue that he had been pummeled by an expert, but if the other blacksmiths were to learn that their guild leader had been viciously pummeled by a person wielding with a chair, they would become the laughingstock of the entire Firesource City!

As such, the two elders hurriedly charged forward to save their guild leader. The zhenqi in their bodies surged furiously as they drew out two white streams of silk-like sword qi.

However, before their attack could land on the young man, the sight before them abruptly darkened. All of a sudden, they found a chair headed right toward their faces as well.

Pilipala!

Zhang Xuan swung his arm relentlessly, bringing the chair down upon the trio before him.

They sure were shameless.

It was out of concern for their dignity that he had held himself

back, but those three were so thick-skinned that they didn't know when they would stop. What formation, strongest attack, and sword art? Shouldn't they have realized that it was futile by now?

Even a Saint 2-dan combat master wasn't a match for him; what could three Saint 1-dan fellows do? Putting aside setting up a formation, even if they were to bring their entire extended family over, they would still not have been a match for him!

After two minutes of merciless pummeling, the three most esteemed blacksmiths in the guild were eventually left lying on the ground, bruised all over.

"This..." Sun Jin was dumbfounded, unable to comprehend what had just happened.

He had thought that, with the guild leader and the two elders making a move simultaneously, they would surely have been able to subdue the other party easily. Yet, never in his dreams did he expect to see the other party easily suppressing the trio with just a chair in hand.

For a chair to actually overwhelm a Half-Saint weapon, just what was this?

"Alright!" After giving the guild leader and the two elders a harsh beating, Zhang Xuan finally placed the chair down and sat down on it once more.

"Are you willing to listen to my words now?"

"You... Who in the world are you?"

Not expecting a twenty-year-old young man to actually possess such astounding prowess, Guild Leader Zhong clenched his jaws tightly and roared, "Barging into the Blacksmith Guild and beating up the guild leader and elders, I have already reported this matter to the head of the Master Teacher Pavilion. Be prepared to face the wrath of Pavilion Master Feng!"

The Master Teacher Pavilion was in charge of maintaining the

security and order of the region it was stationed in. Regardless of the identity of the young man before him, his act of barging into the Blacksmith Guild and intentionally wounding its members had already infringed upon the rules of the Master Teacher Pavilion.

The other party would have already gotten away by the time the personnel from the Blacksmith Guild headquarters arrived to deal with this matter. However, there was still the Firesource City Master Teacher Pavilion located not too far away, and once they learned of the matter, they would surely rush over at top speed.

While many had viewed him to be the strongest expert in Firesource City, Guild Leader Zhong knew that that was far from the case. In terms of fighting prowess, there was no doubt that Pavilion Master Feng was above him. On top of that, for some reason, many experts had gathered in the regional Master Teacher Pavilion in recent days. Once they dispatch their forces, they would surely be able to apprehend that fellow and teach him a lesson that he would never forget.

"Pavilion Master Feng? You are talking about Feng Yihui?" Zhang Xuan asked with an ironic smile on his lips.

"That's right!" Guild Leader Zhong roared affirmatively.

The head of the Firesource City Master Teacher Pavilion, Feng Yihui, was his close friend, and they had known one another for more than a hundred years now. As soon as he learned that someone had barged into the Blacksmith Guild, he had immediately sent a message to inform the other party. Judging from the amount of time that had passed, the other party was due to arrive very soon.

All he could do now was pray for Pavilion Master Feng to arrive as soon as possible so as to back him up. However, at that moment, the young man before him abruptly turned his gaze outside and said, "Pavilion Master Feng, you have been watching this commotion long enough. Isn't it about time you come in?"



"Watching this commotion? Pavilion Master Feng... has already arrived?"

'Gedeng!'

An ominous premonition struck Guild Leader Zhong's heart. He hurriedly turned his head and saw an old man walking over with an awkward look on his face.

"Zhang shi!" Upon walking into the room, the old man bowed deeply to the young man first before turning his gaze toward him. "Guild Leader Zhong..."

This old man was the head of the Firesource City Master Teacher Pavilion, Feng Yihui.

Upon receiving his old friend's call for aid, he had immediately rushed over as soon as he could, fearing that the other party might have been in danger. However, when he arrived at the doorstep, he had realized that the so-called intruder was actually Principal Zhang, and he had immediately halted his footsteps.

Principal Zhang was a 6-star master teacher like him, but as the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, his standing was a tier above his, comparable to 7-star master teachers. Naturally, he didn't have the right to question the other party's actions.

As such, even when he saw Guild Leader Zhong being viciously pummeled by a chair, he had continued to hide outside, not daring to step in to intervene. However, he hadn't expected that Principal Zhang would actually notice his presence.

With his presence exposed, he had no choice but to walk out awkwardly.

"Zhang shi? He is... a master teacher?" Noticing how respectful Pavilion Master Feng was when he greeted the other party, Guild Leader Zhong's heart skipped a beat. He hurriedly turned his gaze toward the young man.

Didn't the other party say that he was a 6-star blacksmith? Why did he become a master teacher all of a sudden? On top of that, for Pavilion Master Feng to treat the other party with such respect... Zhang Shi...

"C-c-could you be... the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, Zhang Xuan?" Guild Leader Zhong's eyes widened in astonishment as realization struck him.

He had no idea whether Principal Zhang was at Firesource City or not, but he was aware that there were twenty thousand students from the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy who were in the midst of a mission there at the moment.

Of the twenty thousand students, ten thousand of them had blacksmith as their main supporting occupation, and they had just requested a substantial sum of smithing resources from them just two days ago, so naturally, he was aware of the matter.

Considering that there were twenty thousand students there, it wouldn't be a surprise if the principal was here as well!

"Indeed, I am Zhang Xuan!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

Principal Zhang? Song Zhen's body stiffened in disbelief when he heard those words, and soon after, his eyes turned fiery with agitation.

It hadn't been long since Principal Zhang had been inaugurated as the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, but his name was already well-known throughout the entire Hongyuan Empire. Even the citizens of a place as remote as Firesource City had all heard of his name.

For such a legendary figure to say that it was possible for him to become a blacksmith... Perhaps, there just might be hope for him!

Forming a stark contrast to Song Zhen's excitement was Sun Jin's look of horror. His eyes narrowed in disbelief as a feeling of weakness assaulted his entire body.

If the other party had only been a blacksmith, he might just have been able to deny it to the very end. But if the other party was a master teacher... it was doubtful that his strategy would be able to work!

The discerning eyes of the master teachers were not something that could be fathomed through common sense, and the Master Teacher Pavilion possessed incredible means that would make it nigh impossible for anyone to lie to them!

Not to mention, Zhang Xuan was the cream of the crop among the master teachers, a true legend!

Guild Leader Zhong's face had paled with fright, but after all that had happened, he was reluctant to give up. "Even if you are... the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, surely it is against the rules for you to barge into the Blacksmith Guild and assault our men..."

Even if the other party had a standing higher than his, to barge into their base and wound so many of their men, surely the Master Teacher Pavilion wouldn't condone such actions!

"Rules?" Harrumphing coldly, Zhang Xuan rose from his seat. Commanding the authority and disposition of a principal, he said, "Only those who abide by the rules deserve to be protected by the rules!"

"Only those who abide by the rules deserve to be protected by the rules?" Guild Leader Zhong was baffled by Zhang Xuan's words. "When has our Blacksmith Guild broken the rules?"

"Song Zhen, come over!" Zhang Xuan turned to the middle-aged man by the side and beckoned him over.

"Yes!" Nodding, Song Zhen hurried forward.

"Exert your zhenqi," Zhang Xuan instructed.

Song Zhen nodded before driving his zhenqi. The next moment, a heavy aura permeated the entire room.

"Th-this type of zhenqi..." Guild Leader Zhong's eyes widened in bewilderment before they abruptly narrowed in realization.

As a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith, he could tell with a single glance what attribute the other party's zhenqi was and whether it complemented the earth flames or not.

It was apparent that, with the middle-aged man's zhenqi, it was impossible for him to become a blacksmith.

Seeing that Guild Leader Zhong understood what he was getting at, Zhang Xuan turned to Song Zhen and urged him on. "Tell your story to Guild Leader Zhong over here!"

"Yes." Song Zhen nodded. "I was one of Blacksmith Sun Jin's apprentices, and I have been learning smithing ever since I was seven. The cultivation technique that I am practicing has been taught by him..."

Without hiding anything, he repeated everything that he had told Zhang Xuan previously to Guild Leader Zhong.

Even though he still wasn't too sure what was going on, he knew that Principal Zhang was doing all of it for him, and he trusted the other party as well.

"He imparted such a cultivation technique to you, and yet, he still urged you to take the blacksmith examination? How is this possible? Unless..."

Right after hearing Song Zhen's words, Guild Leader Zhong face turned completely pale. With a face as cold as the biting frost of a winter night, he turned to look at Sun Jin.

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# Chapter 1025: Master Teachers Aren't to Be Deceived!

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As a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith, if Guild Leader Zhong still couldn't understand what was happening after hearing so much, he might as well just end his life then and there.

However, while doubts had sprouted his heart, he still couldn't really believe that Sun Jin would commit such atrocities.

Sun Jin was the elder he favored the most, and he had even intended to pass down his position as the guild leader to him. Why would the other party commit such foolishness?

However, the truth was already laid clearly before him, and he had no choice but to face it. There was no way the principal of a Master Teacher Academy would barge into the Blacksmith Guild and cause such an uproar without investigating the matter properly.

"What is going on here?" Gritting his teeth coldly, Guild Leader Zhong questioned the fellow in front of him. He really wanted to skin the other party alive at this moment.

If this matter was indeed true, not only would Sun Jin be disgraced, the headquarters would also make an example out of the Firesource City Blacksmith Guild to warn other blacksmiths from engaging in such immoral actions. As the guild leader, he would have to bear the criticisms from the public for his neglect of responsibility, perhaps even going down in historical records for his incompetence!

"I..." Sun Jin's lips twitched uncontrollably as he tried to explain. "Guild leader, I didn't do it! I really don't know what is going on!"

"You don't know what is going on?" A sharp glint flashed across Guild Leader Zhong's eyes. "You should know full well the consequences of lying to a master teacher. Come clean now, and I

might still be able to plead on your behalf. Otherwise, once your sins surface, I won't be able to say a word even if Principal Zhang has you executed at this very moment!"

Master teachers weren't to be deceived!

If one were found lying to a master teacher in the midst of an investigation, their sins would engender far graver consequences. Not only would the person in question be executed on the spot, even their kin and students might be implicated, possibly being barred from joining any Upper Nine Paths occupations for their entire lives!

This wasn't the rule set by the Master Teacher Pavilion but a joint agreement made by the various occupations. This was something they had decided upon out of respect for the Master Teacher Pavilion due to their contributions to the world.

If one would deceive even the teachers, they had already lost their principles. A person who lived by no principles would only eventually become a disaster for society!

"I..."

Sun Jin's face paled, and his body began trembling non-stop.

It went without saying that he was aware of such a rule as well, but there was a spark of hope in the depths of his heart. Perhaps, if he could drag things out and the other party was unable to find any concrete evidence of his wrongdoings, he might just be acquitted of his sins.

"Is there nothing that you want to say?" Guild Leader Zhong bellowed as the disappointment in his eyes deepened.

From the moment that Sun Jin hesitated, the truth was already apparent to him. If Sun Jin had really done nothing of the sort, he would surely have fought hard for his innocence. There wouldn't have been a look of dilemma on his face.

A slight gesture, but it spoke a thousand words.

Having come to the same conclusion as well, Pavilion Master Feng Yihui harrumphed coldly by the side. "Don't harbor hopes that the Master Teacher Pavilion will let this matter pass just by dragging things out. Do you honestly think that the Master Teacher Pavilion would be so incompetent as to be unable to uncover the truth of a matter as simple as this?"

He felt that this matter was a failure on his part as well. Such an atrocity had been committed in his area of jurisdiction, and yet, he was actually ignorant of it. In the end, it even required Principal Zhang, who had barely arrived a day ago, to point the matter out and resolve it.

Having his thoughts being voiced, Sun Jin's body froze in horror. His lips pursed tightly together in fear.

Indeed, as long as the Master Teacher Pavilion put its mind into it, there was nothing that it couldn't uncover.

Many years might have passed after what he had done, but the family members of the thirty apprentices he had taken in back then were still around. He was only able to get away with it thus far due to the lack of attention on the humble apprentices in the Blacksmith Guild. However, if a thorough investigation were to be conducted, the Master Teacher Pavilion would surely be able to find evidence of his wrongdoing.

An apprentice failing the blacksmith examination for many years might be attributed to his lack of talent, but for it to happen to thirty apprentices... even a fool could tell that something was wrong with it.

Moreover...

Gathering his zhenqi in his left hand, he discreetly reached out for the storage ring on his right hand, intending to forcefully destroy it. However, before he could succeed, a powerful surge of sword qi flashed across his eyes.

Huala!

The right hand's middle finger was severed from the major knuckle, and the storage ring fell to the ground as well.

"If I am not mistaken, the cultivation technique that he had imparted to Song Zhen is in here!" Zhang Xuan said coldly.

"I'll check it right now!" Guild Leader Zhong walked forward and picked up the storage ring on the ground.

With a surge of zhenqi, he erased the Soul Imprint on the storage ring before immersing his consciousness into it. A moment later, a book suddenly materialized in his hand.

Flipping it open, his face gradually grew darker and darker, to the point that it seemed as if he might just explode on the spot. With gritted teeth, he passed it over to Song Zhen by the side.

"Is this the cultivation technique that you practice?"

Song Zhen took the book and browsed through it. A few moments later, he nodded. "That's right. This is the cultivation technique that he imparted to us back then!"

Holding the book tightly in his grasp, Guild Leader Zhong turned his gaze back upon Sun Jin. "Is there anything else that you have to say for yourself?"

"I..." Knowing that he was done for, Sun Jin's knees fell onto the ground in despair.

It might have been possible for him to argue his way out of this a moment ago, but with that cultivation technique manual coming to the surface, there was no way he could do so anymore! That was irrefutable evidence of his wrongdoing!

"Greed blinded my eyes. I thought that if I could find a way to procure the valuable ores lying all around Firesource City, I would be able to accrue a huge fortune for myself. Even if I were to retire in the future, I will be able to enjoy a life of luxury."



"For your life of luxury, you cast aside your morals and harmed so many innocent young children. How dare you call yourself a blacksmith? How dare you call yourself a teacher?" Guild Leader Zhong roared vehemently.

While blacksmiths weren't master teachers, they had their own heritage that they passed down from generation to generation as well. As such, teaching was something they viewed with solemnity and sanctity as well. Yet, the fellow before him had actually used nurturing the next generation as an excuse to commit grievous atrocities. This was going beyond the ethical bottom line of all blacksmiths!

With a tap of his finger, Guild Leader Zhong sealed Sun Jin's cultivation before turning to Zhang Xuan and Feng Yihui, saying, "Principal Zhang, Pavilion Master Feng, it is me putting my trust in the wrong person and failing to keep my subordinate in check that allowed for atrocities. I shall resign from my position as the leader of the Blacksmith Guild and spend the rest of my life compensating the families of the thirty deceased apprentices."

As the leader of the Blacksmith Guild, it was a huge breach of responsibility of his that Sun Jin had been able to act as he pleased for more than two whole decades, harming not only Song Zhen but many more apprentices as well. Even though those apprentices had long passed away, they were bound to have kin and friends still living. To make up for his failure, he had decided to dedicate his entire life to making up for this mistake.

"You aren't the perpetrator, but you do have a heavy responsibility to play in this matter!" Zhang Xuan said with his hands behind his back.

While the crime had not been committed by Guild Leader Zhong, it was a fact that he was the one who had failed to notice Sun Jin's misdeeds and granted him the authority of an elder. The greater power that Sun Jin wielded had made it even more difficult for anyone to stand up against him, thus emboldening him to harm

even more people. For one, there was no way Sun Jin could have been able to hide the deaths of so many of his apprentices if not for the power granted to him.

In this sense, Guild Leader Zhong wasn't free from blame either.

"I understand. It is a pity that there is nothing I can really do to make it up to them."

After saying those words, Guild Leader Zhong shot a glance at Song Zhen and sighed wearily.

Putting aside the deceased apprentices, even for the middle-aged man before him, there was nothing he could do that could salvage the damage done to him.

The cultivation technique that the other party practiced was fundamentally at odds with the earth flames. Even as a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith, there was nothing he could do that could change that.

"That might not necessarily be so..." Noting Guild Leader Zhong's gestures, Zhang Xuan could somewhat fathom a guess on what the other party was thinking about. Walking up to Song Zhen, he stretched out his hand and said, "Pass the book to me for a moment."

"Yes." Nodding, Song Zhen respectfully passed the cultivation technique manual that had just been procured from Sun Jin's storage ring to Zhang Xuan.

Taking the book, Zhang Xuan casually flipped through it before lowering his head contemplatively.

A moment later, he took out a book and a brush and began writing swiftly. A few moments later, he had already written out a brand-new cultivation technique. He passed it over to Song Zhen and said, "Cultivate according to the method written here."

By this point, Song Zhen had already made sense of everything that had just happened. The gaze that he directed toward Sun Jin

was devoid of the respect it had before, replaced with endless hostility.

It was with a heart filled with hope that he had become the other party's apprentice. For more than twenty years, it was the hope that he harbored that drove him on, allowing him to persevere through even the toughest of times. However, the more hope one harbored, the greater the despair upon failure.

When Song Zhen took the book from Zhang Xuan's hands, his mind was completely blank.

He was very grateful toward Principal Zhang for bringing him justice, but having the goal that he had spent his entire life striving for being deemed impossible all of a sudden had left him completely lost. He had no idea what he should do from there onward.

"I have said that I will make you a blacksmith. I never renege on my promises." Zhang Xuan chuckled softly. "Once you are done cultivating the cultivation technique I have written down, you will be ready to take the 5-star or even the 6-star blacksmith examination!"

"5-star? 6-star?" Song Zhen was flabbergasted by what he was hearing. He dared not believe what Zhang Xuan had said to be true.

"That's right." Zhang Xuan nodded with a smile.

Song Zhen hurriedly flipped open the book in his hand. The faint aroma from the slightly damp ink and the elegant calligraphy, which seemed as if they would leap out from the pages at any moment, calmed his unsettled mind.

It didn't take him too long to finish reading through the entire book. By the time he was done, his body had already gone completely still, unable to believe what he had just seen.

The fact that he had attained the incredible strength of a

Transcendent Mortal 9-dan in his thirties without the guidance of a master teacher was testimony to the incredible talent he possessed in cultivation. Even though he had only swiftly browsed through the manual once, he could already imagine the frightening might one could potentially harness after mastering it.

Not only would it resolve the conflict between the attribute of his zhenqi and the earth flames, it would even bring his cultivation to greater heights!

Seeing the daze Song Zhen was in, Zhang Xuan urged him on with a smile. "You should start cultivating now!"

"Yes!" Without any hesitation, Song Zhen hurriedly sat onto the floor and began cultivating according to the method recorded on the book.

After Song Zhen began cultivating, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze toward Guild Leader Zhong and said, "I will need to trouble you to find three grade-6 pills for me. They are namely the Bone Reinforcing Body Tempering Pill, Great Reversal Meridian Reconstruction Pill..."

As Song Zhen had practiced the cultivation technique from Sun Jin for more than twenty years now, it was no easy feat to alter his meridians and change the attribute of his zhenqi. Just the cultivation technique that Zhang Xuan had tailored for him wouldn't suffice to make him a blacksmith.

It was necessary to complement the cultivation technique with some pills as well.

Reconstructing the meridians to change the attribute of a zhenqi that was at odds with the earth flames previously to complement it instead was a feat that would have been impossible for anyone else to pull off. Only he, who cultivated the perfect Heaven's Path Divine Art, was capable of calculating a method that could resolve the issue.

"These pills might have been difficult to find anywhere else, but they aren't too uncommon in Firesource City. I will get it done right now!" Guild Leader Zhong said before rushing off.

A city built on a land rich in earth flames, blacksmiths and apothecaries there possessed an inherent advantage given the nature of their craft, thus making them the most popular occupations in Firesource City. Furthermore, there were many precious medicinal herbs in the area.

So, pills that would have been difficult to find anywhere else could easily be found within this city.

It didn't take too long for Guild Leader Zhong to return with the three pills Zhang Xuan spoke of.

Zhang Xuan passed the three pills to Song Zhen and gave him specific instructions on when he should consume them while cultivating.

An hour later, a resounding buzz suddenly sounded from Song Zhen's body, and his aura abruptly surged. Within this short period of time, not only did he manage to change the attribute of his zhenqi, he had even succeeded in achieving a breakthrough to Half-Saint!

# Chapter 1026: Reforging the Golden Origin Cauldron

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"Miracle! It is indeed a miracle!" Guild Leader Zhong muttered with a face dazed with astonishment.

With just a cultivation technique and three pills, a person had actually managed to change the attribute of his zhenqi and achieve a breakthrough while he was at it. This was already a feat that could be considered a miracle!

Despite witnessing the entire process with his own eyes, he still couldn't help but feel as if he had been dreaming. The matter was just too inconceivable for him.

"This is the prowess... of Principal Zhang?" Pavilion Master Feng was also shocked beyond words.

As a 6-star pinnacle master teacher, he possessed an eye of discernment far superior to those of his peers. Naturally, he could also tell how valuable the cultivation technique that had been imparted to Song Zhen was.

To create such a formidable cultivation technique within moments and give it away unreservedly to another... This was how a true master teacher should act! Here was a role model that all master teachers should strive to be like!

It was no wonder he could become the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy at such a young age and win the respect and admiration of all elders and students. Indeed, there was no mediocre man beneath a true legend.

"Thank you, Teacher!"

Song Zhen completed his cultivation while the duo was still overwhelmed with shock, and he hurriedly rushed up to Zhang Xuan and knelt before him respectfully.

At this moment, he was filled with nothing but gratitude and admiration for the young man before him, such that he would even end his life without any hesitation at a word from the other party.

"I am not your teacher, so there is no need for you to be so courteous around me." Zhang Xuan waved his hands.

"You have taught me such a valuable cultivation technique and given me the strength to continue living on. You are the only teacher I will acknowledge in my life, and this won't change until death!" Kneeling on the ground, Song Zhen kowtowed several times with unshakable resolve in his eyes.

Without the other party, he would have been nothing more than a cold corpse lying in an alley. His family would still have been mocked by others for his incompetence. Sun Jin would still have been the high and mighty elder he was, and the atrocities he had committed would eventually have been buried amid the dust of history. Perhaps, countless other apprentices who had harbored hopes as great as his would have ended up walking in the same footsteps as him as well.

Principal Zhang hadn't just taught him a cultivation technique; he had changed his life. Even if the other party was unwilling to take him in as his student, he would still view the other party as his teacher, and this wouldn't change until death.

Seeing the determination in the Song Zhen's eyes, Zhang Xuan eventually nodded in agreement. "Very well then. I can't take you in as my direct disciple, but since the workings of fate have brought us together, I shall take you in as my blacksmith student."

To accept a direct disciple was a heavy commitment. Song Zhen might have been extremely talented, but Zhang Xuan valued character far more than anything else. Given how short a time he had spent with the other party, it was still too early for something like that. Nevertheless, it was fine for him to take the other party in as his blacksmith student.

After all, the responsibility of a master teacher was to spread their knowledge across the world, so it wasn't rare for master teachers to have innumerable students. In a sense, this was similar to his relationship with the members of the Xuanxuan Faction as well. Thus, it wasn't anything much for Zhang Xuan to take Song Zhen in as his student

Hearing those words, Song Zhen hurriedly kowtowed earnestly in agitation. "Thank you, Teacher!"

Seeing such a sight, looks of envy surfaced on the faces of the blacksmiths gathered around the area, and this was no exception even for the elders and Guild Leader Zhong as well.

It was apparent that Principal Zhang possessed an unfathomable understanding of smithing. One who was able to become his student, even if just in name, would surely have a boundless future ahead of them.

Ignoring the looks from the crowd, Zhang Xuan said with a smile, "As your blacksmith teacher, it would be unbecoming of me if I didn't do something for you."

Flicking his wrist, a massive cauldron fell to the ground, raising a cloud of dust. "This is the Guardian Saint Artifact of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, a Saint low-tier artifact, the Golden Origin Cauldron! I intended to reforge it once more... but since you are my student, I will be leaving this job to you. This experience should do you much good in your future endeavors as a blacksmith, and even becoming a 7-star blacksmith shouldn't be a problem to you in the future!"

"You want me to reforge a Saint low-tier artifact? T-t-this... But I am only an apprentice! I have never successfully smithed a Mortal-tier weapon before; I can't possibly take on such a heavy responsibility." Song Zhen was scared out of his wits.

The other blacksmiths in the room, including Guild Leader Zhong, also nearly fainted from the sheer ridiculousness of what



they were witnessing.

A Saint-tier artifact was something that only 7-star blacksmiths were qualified to come into contact with. Being able to work with one would indeed allow one to make huge progress as a blacksmith, be it in terms of skill or state of mind.

This was especially so for 6-star pinnacle blacksmiths. This experience might very well have opened a brand-new window for them into smithing, thus becoming the impetus for them to make a breakthrough.

But... to allow an apprentice who hadn't even succeeded in smithing a Mortal-tier weapon before to work with it... Was the other party really not afraid of breaking the Saint Guardian Artifact of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy?

"Master, you can't be serious..." Not only were the crowd acting in such a manner, even the Golden Origin Cauldron itself was on the brink of tears. "Actually... I think that my current cultivation is wonderful as it is; there is no need for me to make another breakthrough."

It did want to make a breakthrough, but only if it was done through its master's hands would it be able to rest assured.

To allow a fellow who has never successfully smithed a weapon in his life to work on it instead... What the heck is that?

Did I do something that so greatly offended you recently that you had to find such a reason to do me in?

"Enough! What is with this nonsense that you are spouting?" Paying no heed to the horrified Golden Origin Cauldron, Zhang Xuan waved his hand.

Even though his current mastery as a blacksmith was indeed at 6-star pinnacle, the reforging of the Golden Origin Cauldron didn't just involve refining and quenching. More importantly, the Violetgilt Metal would have to be smithed into the Golden Origin

Cauldron, a task that involved forging.

And that happened to be something that he wasn't good at.

If he were to really attempt to reforge the Golden Origin Cauldron before so many formidable blacksmiths, not only would it be embarrassing for him, the Golden Origin Cauldron could very well be hammered out of shape in his hands, possibly becoming an unseemly slab of metal!

While Song Zhen was only an apprentice, Zhang Xuan could tell through how the other party forged his sword earlier that he had all of the basics down. Perhaps it was due to his inability to handle flames, Song Zhen seemed to have focused all of his efforts in refining his forging skills, granting him a forging mastery that was on par or even superior to most 6-star blacksmiths. Without a doubt, the other party was the ideal candidate to smith the Violetgilt Metal into the Golden Origin Cauldron!

With this success, Song Zhen would be able to gain a deep insight into smithing. It would only be a matter of time before he became a 6-star blacksmith or even beyond that.

Through this, not only would Zhang Xuan be able to avoid any embarrassment due to his inability to forge weapons, he would also be able to portray himself as an unfathomable expert, thus deepening the respect others had for him. More importantly, he could temper this newly-accepted student of his while he was at it.

In a sense, it was like killing three birds with one stone, so why not?

"Yes..." Seeing that his teacher had gotten angry at his hesitance, Song Zhen dared not say any more. Nodding, he plucked up his courage and walked over, facing the Golden Origin Cauldron with an ashen face.

On the other hand, the Golden Origin Cauldron was shaking uncontrollably, devoid of the haughtiness and arrogance it usually

commanded when it crushed Saint realm experts. Its three thick legs were trembling so much that it seemed as if they would cave in at any moment.

Seeing the states that the man and cauldron were in, Zhang Xuan shook his head. Without wasting any time, he began issuing instructions. "The reforging of the Golden Origin Cauldron is an extremely important task. I will be issuing you instructions, so make sure to follow them carefully. There is no room for mistakes here!"

"Yes!" Hearing that Zhang Xuan would be guiding him along, Song Zhen heaved a sigh of relief.

"Take out the Violetgilt Metal I had you bring along earlier, you will need it in the forging process..."

After the preparations were done, Zhang Xuan began issuing more detailed instructions to Song Zhen. "First, place the Violetgilt Ore into the cauldron and drive the earth flames with your zhenqi for thirteen breaths so as to melt it. Thirteen breaths later, place the Golden Origin Cauldron inside and begin fusing the two together. Twenty-seven breaths later, take the resulting alloy out and use the Thousand Metal Forging Technique to hammer the Golden Origin Cauldron 184 times, not one more, not one less. Make sure to hammer it all over, and every strike must consist of only 80% of your full strength..."

Instead of using zhenqi telepathy, Zhang Xuan said the instructions out loud. Hearing the instructions, the blacksmiths in the area glanced at one another with shocked faces.

They had thought that the instructions that Zhang Xuan would be issuing Song Zhen would be simple, basic ones. However, after hearing those words, they realized that they had been utterly wrong. Never in the world had they seen such precise smithing before!

How in the world could the other party issue such detailed

instructions? That would require a thorough understanding of the Golden Origin Cauldron, Violetgilt Metal, and even the properties of the earth flames! Not just that, the other party had to know Song Zhen's capability and strength inside out!

This wasn't something that could be achieved with just outstanding eye of discernment alone. The sheer number of calculations required in doing so were bound to be at a fearsome level as well!

"Yes!" Hearing those words, Song Zhen suddenly had a feeling that his teacher might have calculated the entire smithing process from the start to the end, and he couldn't help but heave a sigh of relief. Swiftly memorizing what was being said, he grabbed the Violetgilt Metal ore by the side and tossed it into the cauldron.

In the Blacksmith Guild, there was no nearly no room that didn't have a formation that was connected straight to the earth flames beneath the ground. Driving his newfound strength as a Half-Saint, flames surged from the ground, and before long, the Violetgilt Metal had melted. Following which, Song Zhen placed the Golden Origin Cauldron inside...

All kinds of procedures were carried out strictly to Zhang Xuan's demands, without the slightest deviation.

"Not bad!" Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction.

As he had expected, the other party's mastery in forging had indeed reached the level of a true master. Even most 6-star pinnacle blacksmiths would struggle to match him.

His twenty-four years of hard work hadn't been futile. It was only due to his unyielding perseverance even in the face of failure that he had managed to achieve such a level of skill.

An hour later, a resounding chime reverberated from the Golden Origin Cauldron's body, and its Saint low-tier prowess began rising steadily. At that moment, an overwhelming aura burst into the

surroundings, forcing the surrounding spectators to retreat continuously.

Hu!

A few moments later, the aura was reined back in. The Golden Origin Cauldron carried a lofty air around it and a brilliant glow.

"Saint intermediate-tier artifact? Good job!" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

With just a look, he knew that he had made the right call.

The current Golden Origin Cauldron had managed to fuse perfectly with the Violetgilt Metal, reaching the level of a Saint intermediate-tier artifact, granting it strength on par with Saint 4-dan pinnacle experts!

If he were to meet the Goldenleaf King and the others once more, he would easily be able to subdue them with just a devastating crush from his cauldron! With this, the days when he would have to go through so much effort talking others into drinking his wine were finally over!

"I am still alive? Not only am I still alive, my cultivation has risen as well? Wonderful!" While Zhang Xuan was feeling glad, the Golden Origin Cauldron began pouncing about excitedly.

With a mere apprentice blacksmith working on it, it had thought that certain doom was awaiting it. Who could have known that, not only would the smithing be successful, its cultivation would even rise by a greater extent than it had initially envisioned? At this moment, it was so happy that it could hug Song Zhen and give him a good kiss.

"Teacher..." At the same time, Song Zhen also hadn't expected that he would succeed. An agitated glint rippled in his eyes, revealing the immense joy and delight he felt from his success.

While a huge reason for his success was due to his teacher guiding him along step by step, this experience had still given him

a deep insight into smithing. As long as he could raise his cultivation to the required level, the 7-star blacksmith examination wasn't beyond reach!

It could be said that... this single experience had built his foundations in smithing. As long as he continued working hard, his future accomplishments would be boundless!

In order to give him such an experience, his teacher had unhesitatingly entrusted the Saint Guardian Artifact of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy to him. To have such deep trust in him... this favor was something that he would never be able to repay in his lifetime!

"Alright. As long as you internalize this experience, you should be able to advance to great heights as a blacksmith in the future."

With a grab, Zhang Xuan returned the Golden Origin Cauldron to his storage ring before waving his hand. "Pavilion Master Feng, I will be taking my leave first. I will be counting on you to take care of the other matters here!"

After saying those words, he turned around and walked away. Before long, he had already disappeared from view.

Departing with a fling of the sleeves after the job is done, asking for no compensation in return for his efforts... This is a true master teacher!

Seeing how Zhang Xuan departed without the slightest hesitation, such thoughts emerged within the minds of the remaining crowd.

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# Chapter 1027: I Went Easy On You Just Now!

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Right after leaving the Blacksmith Guild, Zhang Xuan smiled softly.

He had only intended to prevent an innocent life from being lost, but who knew that he would end up managing to fulfil his promise to the Golden Origin Cauldron while he was at it, rising its cultivation significantly? On top of that, he had even found himself a talented blacksmith student.

It could be said that the trouble he had gone through was well worth the rewards.

As for how Sun Jin would be dealt with, that had nothing to do with him.

Nevertheless, there was no doubt that Sun Jin would have to pay a heavy price for the sins that he had committed. The death penalty would likely be on the table.

As much as Zhang Xuan hated to kill, he felt that there was no need to show mercy to those who trampled on their own students in the hope of elevating themselves.

Back when Zhang Xuan first arrived in the world, he had nary a care in the world. As long as a matter was none of his business, he would view it with perfect nonchalance, never involving himself in anything that would spell trouble. However, after everything he had gone through, he had already become a true master teacher at heart. He had begun to understand the heavy responsibilities that he bore, and he intended to live up to them as well.

At this moment, Zhang Xuan suddenly recalled what had happened earlier in the night. Right, I wonder if Luo shi is angry at me. I should rush back to take a look.

He slapped his forehead in distress before hurriedly rushing toward Luo Ruoxin's residence.

It had not been easy for him to close the distance between the both of them, and he didn't wish for them to return to square one due to this matter.

He should have held himself back the previous night! Why had he been so brazen as to hold the other party's hand? Hopefully, the other party wouldn't blame him for this matter.

With a conflicted mind, Zhang Xuan hurried his footsteps, and before long, Luo Ruoxin's residence was within sights.

Before he could arrive at the entrance, he saw a young man walking straight toward him.

It was the battle fanatic Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall who had challenged him earlier in the day, Feng Xun!

Caught up over the Combat Master Hall's loss to the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, the other party had been trying to challenge him for a while now, and that had left him deeply troubled.

As such, upon seeing Feng Xun walk over, Zhang Xuan immediately tried to find a place where he could hide. However, before he could do so, the other party had already caught sight of him and immediately rushed up, his eyes blazing with fighting will.

"Principal Zhang, do you dare have a match with me? I will suppress my cultivation to that of your level!" Feng Xun challenged with a loud voice.

"I..." Zhang Xuan was conflicted.

He had intended to quickly find Luo Ruoxin to apologize to her, but judging from how Feng Xun was acting, it was apparent that the other party wasn't going on allow him to pass if he rejected the duel.

Out of consideration for his standing, the other party had not



forced the matter the previous time. However, for some reason, the other party was extremely insistent on having their duel this time round.

Sighing deeply, Zhang Xuan relented. Waving his hand, he said, "Very well. If you suppress your cultivation, I will have a duel with you. However, it will just be a friendly spar."

Considering how determined the other party was, he knew that it was only a matter of time before this duel would be held.

"Good!" Receiving the other party's agreement, Feng Xun's eyes lit up. He swiftly suppressed his cultivation from Saint 3-dan pinnacle to Nascent Saint pinnacle.

Hong long!

Amidst a powerful gust of wind, he charged right toward Zhang Xuan.

...

Rewinding back to the moment when Zhang Xuan and Luo Ruoxin separated...

With a face tinged with redness, the young lady hurriedly returned to her residence.

She had lived by herself from a very young age, and never once had she really come into contact with a man before. As such, when she was touched by the other party, she flew into a fluster.

After walking a distance away, she turned around to take a look, only to find that Zhang Xuan had not followed her. A frown of displeasure emerged on her face.

This was her first time meeting someone that dense!

She was embarrassed by the touch, not angry! Those who had the slightest bit of emotional intelligence would know that this was the moment to rush up to apologize. This was the perfect opportunity for the other party to get closer to her, and she could

also use the chance to resolve the awkwardness from before. Yet, that fellow... had actually disappeared from sight?

That pig-headed fool!

It was only a ten-minute walk from the tavern where they had eaten earlier, and yet, despite waiting for two whole hours, the other party was still nowhere to be seen. Rage dyed her face a shade of pink.

Giving up on waiting for the fellow, Luo Ruoxin returned to her residence, only to see Mu shi waiting outside for her.

"Luo shi!"

"Un. What is the matter?" Luo Ruoxin frowned.

Mu shi hesitated for a brief moment before speaking. "It's like this. I have just received news that there could very well be Otherworldly Demon Kings in the ancient domain, so... Luo shi, won't you consider backing out of the expedition team?"

"Are you trying to order me?" Luo Ruoxin asked with a cold face.

"I-I dare not!" Mu shi was horrified.

"That had better be true!" Luo Ruoxin waved her hands coldly as she walked past Mu shi to open the doors to her residence. However, flurried footsteps sounded at that moment, and turning around, she saw a young man heading toward her.

It was Feng Xun from the Combat Master Hall.

From the moment he first met Luo Ruoxin, he had been already spellbound by her beauty. He had been trying to find a way to get close to her, but the other party had never granted him such an opportunity.

However, with the ancient domain opening tomorrow and knowing that he could very well lose his life within, he eventually built up his courage and rushed over.

Seeing the young lady's silhouette, Feng Xun yelled, "Luo shi..."

Luo Ruoxin had disguised herself, and Feng Xun didn't wield the power to see through it either. Nevertheless, she was still an outstanding beauty even with her disguise on, possessing grace that was on par with Hu Yaoyao and the others. It was no wonder Feng Xun found himself mesmerized by her.

"I have something that I wish to say to you!" Feng Xun exclaimed.

Luo Ruoxin turned around and said, "Say your piece."

"Right here?" Feng Xun glanced at Mu shi and his surroundings awkwardly, unsure of what he should do.

On the other hand, seeing that Feng Xun wasn't saying a word, Luo Ruoxin couldn't be bothered either. Turning around, she opened the door and stepped into her residence.

"W-wait a moment! I will speak! I will speak!" Knowing that he might not have another opportunity, Feng Xun gritted his teeth and stepped forward. "From the moment I caught sight of you, I was already enchanted by your charm. Luo shi, won't you walk down the long path of cultivation alongside me?"

Feng Xun had a straightforward personality, and he didn't like to hide anything inside of him. Thus, his words were very direct as well.

"Send our guest off!"

Luo Ruoxin had been wondering what important matters the other party was going to speak of when she heard those words. She waved her hand before turning around to return to her residence.

"Luo shi, I haven't finished my piece yet..." Not expecting the other party to leave without giving him a proper reply, Feng Xun hurriedly rushed up. However, before he could follow the other party into the residence, Mu shi had already blocked his way.

"Combat Master Feng, please return for now!"

"I..." Feng Xun panicked.

Noting that Feng Xun was unwilling to give up, Mu shi frowned in displeasure. "Luo shi has already made her stand very clear by turning you away at the door."

Those words were like a pail of cold water, extinguishing the flames in Feng Xun's heart.

Indeed. He had already made things very clear, but the other party was still unwilling to allow him to enter. This was already a direct response to his confession. He would only be embarrassing himself further by pestering the other party.

"Pardon my disturbance..." Understanding this much, Feng Xun trudged away with a disconsolate look on his face. However, before he could get far, he saw Zhang Xuan rushing over in his direction.

That fellow seems to be rather close with Luo shi... Could she have rejected me because of him? Such an idea suddenly popped into Feng Xun's head, and it swiftly grew and consumed his mind. Unable to hold himself back anymore, he rushed over to block Zhang Xuan's path, thus resulting in the current situation.

...

Naturally, Zhang Xuan was unaware that the reason the other party was confronting him. Seeing the other party suppressing his cultivation to his level, he couldn't help but feel slightly embarrassed.

To be facing the other party with his cultivation suppressed to the same level as him... Wasn't that as good as bullying the other party?

But in any case, that fellow was the one who had proposed it. After a short internal struggle, Zhang Xuan felt that he should be magnanimous and go along with the other party's demand instead.

"I will bring you down!" Roaring coldly, Feng Xun raised his fist and rushed forward.

He had already heard from Liao Xun and the others that the

young man before him possessed an unfathomable level of mastery in battle techniques. Thus, he decided to exploit his greatest expertise right from the start—speed!

Of the martial arts in the world, none were infallible... except for speed!

Speed happened to be what he specialized in, and as long as he made full use of it, given his superior combat instincts, he didn't believe that he wouldn't be able to defeat the other party!

Hu!

Carrying immense pressure that threatened to burst even the air, his fist arrived before Zhang Xuan in the blink of an eye.

He had thought that his amazing speed would leave the other party flustered, but to his shock, the other party... was stretching his back lazily!

In the crucial moment of a battle, instead of dodging or retaliating, you are choosing to stretch your back lazily instead? What do you mean by that?

Despite being bewildered by the nonsensical action before him, Feng Xun's fist didn't have the slightest intention of halting at all. However, before his fist could arrive at its target, the other party suddenly stopped stretching his back, and a palm abruptly flew toward him, as if striking down a pesky fly!

Padah!

He was sent tumbling into the distance. Under the immense might of the slap, his face immediately bruised red.

Truthfully, in the moment he had seen the slap, he had already begun carrying out evasive maneuvers. Yet, no matter what he did, he simply couldn't get himself out of the trajectory of the slap, as if there was some compelling power that drew the other party's palm to his face.

"Damn it!" For a combat master like him to be struck flying with but a slap, it wasn't too hard to imagine the immense frustration he must have felt. He immediately got back to his feet, intending to charge over to return the favor, but at that moment, the other party waved his hand in exasperation and said, "Why don't we just let this matter go? There is really no need for us to fight..."

"How can we end this duel without determining the victor?" In Feng Xun's eyes, it seemed like Zhang Xuan was trying to 'have mercy' on him, and that left him even more enraged. With a furious roar, he charged forward once more.

The next moment, his neck was caught by the other party's left palm, and a right palm struck his face relentlessly.

The next, next moment, Feng Xun was lying on the ground, and the other party was sitting on his back. Both fists of the other party rained down on him, as if a cotton farmer scutching 1 a bed of cotton.

The next, next, next moment, the talented combat master was lying on the ground, clutching his head tightly to his body. The other party was standing before him, kicking him mercilessly.

...

"Let's just end it here. I think this should be sufficient to consider it your loss..."

Ten minutes later, seeing how Feng Xun was completely bruised from head to toe, Zhang Xuan couldn't bring himself to strike anymore.

He had already gone easy on the other party, but the other party was simply too weak. There wasn't the slightest feeling of accomplishment he felt from pummeling the other party.

Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan walked past Feng Xun, and after knocking on the door, he entered Luo Ruoxin's residence.

The young lady hadn't rested for the night yet. She was standing

in the main hall, deeply contemplating something. On the other hand, Mu shi was standing at an area not too far away from her with his head lowered respectfully.

Zhang Xuan hesitated for a moment before speaking. "Just now, I..."

"Please leave. I intend to rest now." Luo Ruoxin waved her hand coldly.

"Erk..." Seeing how he was evicted right after arriving, Zhang Xuan was at a complete loss as to what he should do. His eyes couldn't help but swim toward Mu shi.

After a moment of hesitation, Mu shi coughed slightly before offering a friendly warning. "Senior Uncle, Feng Xun was chased away right after he confessed just a moment ago. Luo shi isn't in a good mood at the moment..."

"Confessed?" A deep frown appeared on Zhang Xuan's forehead.

"That's right." Mu shi nodded.

"Pardon me for a moment, I have some matters that I have to deal with right now." Turning around, Zhang Xuan left Luo Ruoxin's residence.

"Matters that you have to deal with right now?" Mu shi was stunned.

"Un. I just had a spar with Feng Xun, but thinking back, I think that it was disrespectful of me to have gone easy on someone who has challenged me so earnestly. I should at least give him a taste of the full extent of my might."

Shortly after Zhang Xuan left, screams of agony from a certain talented combat master resounded in the night.

Feng Xun had just been viciously pummeled, such that he could hardly bring himself to his feet to leave. How could he possibly be a match for the energetic Zhang Xuan?

"I didn't see anything," Mu shi mumbled beneath his breath, and he averted his gaze.

On the other hand, the eyes of the young lady not too far away curled into beautiful crescents.

"Pfft."

A chuckle escaped her lips.



# Chapter 1028: Opening of the Ancient Domain

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At this moment, the thought of ending his life flashed through Feng Xun's mind.

He had thought that the other party had already exerted the full extent of his strength in the duel they had just a moment ago, but he realized that the other party hadn't even displayed a fifth of his true might.

In other words, with just a small portion of his strength, the other party was already able to crush him easily. Yet, somehow provoked by something, the other party was going all out against him at this very moment. Without a doubt, there was no way he could withstand the other party's strength. Under the vicious pummeling, he found that even his desire to live had been beaten out of him.

Honestly speaking...

What the heck is this? Didn't you say that it was just a friendly spar? On top of that, you had already won earlier... To rush back here to pummel me once more, what is going on?

Seeing how the other party was continuing to pummel him, Feng Xun couldn't stand it any longer. Releasing the cap on his cultivation, he raised his cultivation to Saint 1-dan. The outcome was that... there was no difference at all. He was still getting pummeled without fail.

What left him on the verge of spurting blood was that the other party didn't seem to have even noticed that his strength had increased!

Clenching his jaws, he raised his cultivation up to Saint 2-dan, but... the outcome still wasn't any different. He was still getting pummeled viciously!

He was a Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall, a top-notch genius who boasted the greatest fighting prowess among his peers. He could knock down even opponents stronger than him, and yet... even when his cultivation was two realms stronger than the fellow before him, he was still no match for the other party at all.

The crushing blow to his pride left him on the verge of insanity.

Forget it, to hell with my pride and dignity... With a look of savagery, Feng Xun cast away his final shred of hesitation and released his full might.

With the entirety of his strength as a Saint 3-dan pinnacle expert released, an incredible force burst forth from him, rattling even the sky.

"I will make you pay the price for your insolence..." Roaring furiously, he raised his fist to strike the other party, but before he could do so, the sight before him turned dark.

A leg had already arrived in front of his face.

Putting aside the immense strength that the kick harnessed, it was even aimed toward one of his cultivation mingmen. Barely a moment after he had roared excitedly, he was already back to convulsing powerlessly on the ground.

In that instant, an epiphany struck him...Treasure your life, distance yourself from Zhang Xuan!

He carried the reputation of a genius as well, but he didn't even come close to the level of the young man before him; there was a world of difference between their capabilities!

It was no wonder his direct disciple was qualified to challenge the Progeny of Combat Selection, and even a feeble-looking student whom he had barely begun teaching could floor the members of their Combat Master Hall.

The young man before him was a true monster!

After knocking Feng Xun out, Zhang Xuan finally succeeded in venting the frustrations within him. Stretching his back lazily, he felt refreshed once more. Turning around, he returned to Luo Ruoxin's residence.

However, before he could enter the residence, he saw Mu Shi walking out from the doors.

"Senior Uncle, Luo Shi has already retired for the night. She has said to leave whatever you have to say until tomorrow."

"Ah..." Hearing that Luo Ruoxin didn't intend to meet him, Zhang Xun could only return to his residence while scratching his head.

The night felt exceptionally long.

When dawn arrived, everyone was already gathered in the main hall of the Master Teacher Pavilion. After a night of recuperation, Feng Xun had mostly recovered from the pummeling he had suffered the previous night, but the swelling all over his body hadn't disappeared yet.

Upon seeing Feng Xun's current state, the leader of the expedition, Guild Leader Han, asked worriedly, "Combat Master Feng, what happened? Can you still join the expedition in your current state?"

The other party had been fine the day before, so how did he end up in such a state overnight?

Feng Xun hurriedly waved his hands. "I'm fine; I only met with some problems in my cultivation last night. I have already taken some medicine, so it won't pose any trouble."

To challenge a Nascent Saint and end up being pummeled badly instead... Even if someone were to threaten him with a knife on his throat, he would still be too embarrassed to admit it!

"You met with some problems in your cultivation?" Guild Leader Han shook his head.

He was not a master teacher, but that didn't mean he was a fool. How could someone end up with swelling all over his body from cultivation? It was apparent that he had been beaten up!

Nevertheless, since the other party was unwilling to speak, he wasn't interested in prying any further either. Thus, he quickly scanned through the crowd before nodding. "Alright. Since everyone is here, let's head over!"

The seal to the ancient domain was about to open, so it was time for them to set off.

Riding on the back of the saint beast, Zhang Xuan secretly sneaked Luo Ruoxin a peek. Noting the composed look on the other party's face, seemingly not blaming him for the matter yesterday, he heaved a sigh of relief internally before heading up to her.

"Luo shi, there are many dangers lurking in the ancient domain. Why don't we team up together so that we can look after one another?"

"Sure." Luo Ruoxin nodded.

"That's great!"

Taking Luo Ruoxin's acceptance of his request as a sign to indicate that she wasn't angry at him, Zhang Xuan let out another sigh of relief.

A few minutes later, the massive Swallow Embracing Mountain came into sight once more.

The crowd landed on the ground.

The seal didn't seem to be much different than how it had been a few days earlier. The flag that Zhang Xuan had planted in the ground was still sitting quietly amid the formation, and surges of powerful energy were being released into the surroundings.

"According to my calculations, the seal will be opening today. However, I am not certain of the exact timing, so we will have to

wait patiently," Guild Leader Han explained.

To be able to calculate the day of the opening of such a powerful seal was already an incredible feat in itself. To calculate its timing on top of that would be demanding too much from Guild Leader Han.

Understanding this fact, the crowd waited patiently on the spot. Around two hours later, some changes began occurring to the mist-like seal. The entire depression first turned crimson with a seven-colored bridge abruptly materializing before everyone's eyes.

"It's opening!" Upon noticing the changes, the eyes of the crowd lit up.

Guild Leader Han stepped forward to assess the situation in front for a moment before turning around to brief the crowd on the happenings. "That seven-colored bridge is the key to entering the seal. It will only appear for around fifteen minutes, so we should quickly enter!"

After saying those words, he took the lead.

The others quickly followed suit.

While the seven-colored bridge was made out of the energy harnessed by the formation, it didn't feel unsteady or wobbly in the least. On the contrary, it was exceptionally sturdy. Walking on it felt no different from walking anywhere else; it didn't feel dangerous at all.

Following behind the crowd, Zhang Xuan stepped onto the seven-colored bridge. The scenery around him, an azure sky with fleeting white clouds accompanied by a verdant mountain and an emerald lake, formed a stark contrast to the world beneath his feet, a dark abyss with occasional bursts of searing currents. Such vastly different existences placed together formed quite a mystical sight, leaving Zhang Xuan feeling as if he was standing on the intersection between two worlds.

To construct such a sturdy bridge out of emptiness, the person who created the ancient domain sure is fearsome, Zhang Xuan remarked internally.

Zhang Xuan was also capable of constructing a bridge that one could walk on out of his zhenqi, but to do so through a formation... that was far beyond his current capability.

It wasn't just him; even 7-star formation masters would be incapable of such a feat.

It seemed like Zhang Xuan's prior guess was right. The elder who had left behind the ancient domain was, at the very least, an 8-star formation master!

It was no wonder the old principal was so wary, leaving even a tombstone behind for himself in the Master Teacher Academy out of fear that he would never return.

Eye of Insight!

While Zhang Xuan proceeded forward, he focused his eyes toward the very end of the bridge.

Over there, a seven-colored light barrier was positioned perpendicularly to the bridge. Crimson lava flurried beyond the barrier, generating an immense amount of heat that seemed as if it would reduce any man to ash.

After studying it for a moment, Zhang Xuan frowned. The structure of the light barrier... there is some resemblance to the seal in the Subterranean Gallery.

Zhang Xuan couldn't help but feel that there was something uncanny about the light barrier, so he took a closer look. To his astonishment, he realized that it was nearly identical to the seal he had seen in the Subterranean Gallery, the only difference being that the one before him was a simplified version.

Nevertheless, it still harnessed incredible power that prevented anyone from barging through it forcefully. As long as it didn't open

up, it would be impossible for anyone to enter.

Otherwise, the seal in the Subterranean Gallery wouldn't have kept the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe at bay for several dozen millenniums either, only allowing a few small fries to slip through its defenses occasionally.

Before long, following the crowd in front of him, he arrived before the light barrier.

By this point, the others had also caught sight of the scenery that lay ahead of the light barrier, and their faces paled in horror.

"It's nothing but lava in front! It can't be that... the ancient domain lies in the midst of the lava?" one of the master teachers of the expedition exclaimed in shock.

With the temperature of the lava, even metal would melt in moments upon contact with it. Even though most members of the expedition had already reached Saint realm, they still dared not enter such a place haphazardly.

"The details I know about the ancient domain are severely limited. The only way we can find out is to explore it ourselves." Wu shi shook his head.

"Then..."

"Don't think too much about it. Since we are already here, let's just go in and take a look!" Wu shi said. However, there was still some hesitation on the faces of those around him, so after a moment of contemplation, he stepped forward and said, "How about this? I will try it out first, and if I meet with any danger, you all should evacuate the area quickly."

On top of being the highest-ranked master teacher among the group, he was the strongest one as well. In face of danger, he was obliged to step forward to protect the others. If even he was unable to face whatever dangers lay within the lava, it was unlikely that the others would be able to either.

After saying those words, Wu shi channeled his zhenqi out from his acupoints and wrapped his body with it. Once that was done, he charged straight through the light barrier.

Hu!

Without the slightest impediment, 'huala!', Wu shi slid through the light barrier and disappeared from everyone's sight.

A few moments later, Wu shi's silhouette emerged once more. His figure was a little indistinct and vague, but his gesture was most certainly beckoning them over. Most likely, there was no danger within.

"Let's enter," Guild Leader Han said before stepping through the light barrier.

Zhang Xuan followed suit as well. The light barrier felt slightly viscous, reminiscent of the surface of water. Stepping through it, it was as if he had stepped into another world. Intense heat, as if omnipresent, assaulted him from all directions relentlessly, leaving his skin with a slightly stinging sensation.

Gazing downward, he realized that a ten kilometers wide enormous volcano vent stood beneath him. From time to time, flames would burst forth, threatening to devour the group whole.

Is the ancient domain really beneath the lava? Zhang Xuan frowned.

He had imagined that there would be some kind of passageway beyond the light barrier to lead the group into the ancient domain, but to his bewilderment, there was nothing but lava around him.

If the ancient domain was truly located beneath the lava, this expedition would be far more dangerous than he had previously imagined.

Putting aside the searing heat harnessed in the lava, just its sheer scale of the lava pool and the inability to see past the opaque lava made it extremely plausible that one could lose their way within,



possibly never returning at all.

"Where do we go?"

The first person to enter, Wu shi, turned to Guild Leader Han with a deep frown on his face.

The other party was a formation master; perhaps, there might be some kind of formation hidden in the area that they were supposed to utilize to enter the ancient domain.

"Let me take a look." Nodding, Guild Leader Han took out a compass and paced around the massive vent of the volcano. Gradually, the frown on his forehead deepened.

"The spiritual energy current in this area is extremely stable; there is no formation hidden in the area. It seems like we can only slowly explore the area to find the entrance."

"Explore the area?" Looking at the lava pool, which boasted a diameter of ten kilometers, the lips of the crowd twitched uncontrollably.

How were they supposed to explore the area?

Were they to dive into the lava?

Even if their bodies could endure the heat, their clothes couldn't possibly do the same!

A bunch of 6-star and 7-star master teachers and combat masters walking past one another stark naked...

The image was so beautiful that it was more likely that they would die of embarrassment before they found the ancient domain!

Realizing the same, Zhang Xuan subconsciously turned his gaze toward Luo Ruoxin. With a deeply conflicted expression, he mumbled unknowingly beneath his breath, "If her clothes were to be burnt as well, should I look... or not look?"

Just as Zhang Xuan was deep in thought over the serious problem

he was facing, he suddenly heard a feminine voice quivering with rage beside him.

"You... What kind of nonsense are you thinking about?"

# Chapter 1029: The Fearsome Lava (1)

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Turning his gaze over, he saw Luo Ruoxin's face flushed crimson, seemingly ready to explode at any moment.

While others were thinking about how they should find the entrance to the ancient domain, that fellow was assessing her from head to toe. With a look, it was apparent that he was thinking of nothing good!

"Cough cough!" Not expecting that the other party would catch him contemplating over an issue as serious as that, Zhang Xuan choked on his saliva. Posturing himself upright, he replied with a dignified tone, "I was just thinking that our line of thought might have been wrong in the start. Considering how large the lava pool is, I don't think that we are meant to search every inch of it. So, I have been thinking that it might be a trial from the master of the ancient domain instead."

"A trial?" Realizing that she had misunderstood Zhang Xuan when he was contemplating over such serious issues, Luo Ruoxin couldn't help but feel a little embarrassed.

"That's right!"

Standing in midair, Zhang Xuan glanced at the lava pool before him and gestured grandly. "If the master of the ancient domain didn't intend for anyone to enter the land he had created, he wouldn't have constructed his formation so that it opened up once in a while, allowing others to enter. Since he has done so, I think that could be taken as a sign that the ancient domain is something that he intended to leave for the later generations, and the lava is most likely the first trial that those who seek the ancient domain have to undergo. Only those who manage to clear this trial will be able to advance further in."

"This..." Luo Ruoxin pondered over Zhang Xuan's words for a moment before nodding in agreement.

Zhang Xuan's words made perfect sense. A formation master who could create such a powerful seal couldn't have possibly made the grave mistake of having the seal open every now and then. In other words, it was likely that the opening of the seal was an effect that the master of the ancient domain had intended right from the start.

Luo Ruoxin turned to Zhang Xuan and asked, "Then... are you able to deduce the intention behind this pool of lava? That will likely be the key that leads us to the true entrance of the ancient domain."

"I am still in the midst of figuring that out," Zhang Xuan replied calmly as he secretly heaved a sigh of relief within.

It was fortunate that he had reacted swiftly. Otherwise, if the other party were to learn of his thoughts, she might very well have strangled him to death on the spot.

Forget it, I should put those thoughts aside for the moment. Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan tossed aside the miscellaneous thoughts in his mind and began assessing the situation before him.

The lava beneath flurried furiously, reminiscent of boiling water. Even without approaching it, one could still vividly feel the intolerable heat that it emitted, seemingly attempting to roast one alive.

Activating the Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan began studying the area carefully.

Unfortunately, the vent of the volcano was filled with a thick layer of smoke puffing up, similar to that of a sauna room filled with steam, making it difficult for one to see through it.

After scanning the area, Zhang Xuan found no trace of any formation at all. In fact, even the flow of spiritual energy was indistinct to him here.

Could the ancient domain be within a folded space? Frowning,

Zhang Xuan was just about to communicate with the Myriad Anthive Queen to have the latter search the area when he suddenly heard a voice.

"This doesn't seem to be ordinary lava..."

Turning his gaze toward the source of the voice, Zhang Xuan saw Wu Shi and Guild Leader Han standing side by side. At this moment, the latter had an astonished look on his face, as if he had noticed something bewildering.

The others in the area had also noticed the anomaly with Guild Leader Han, and they turned perplexed looks toward him as well.

"Take a look!"

As he said those words, Guild Leader Han flicked his wrist, and a Spirit intermediate-tier weapon appeared in his grasp. With a swing of his arm, the weapon flew straight toward the lava.

Putong!

As soon as the weapon came into contact with the lava, a sizzling sound immediately echoed loudly in the air. Within just a few moments, it had already been reduced to liquid, disappearing completely from sight.

"The lava... is able to melt even a Spirit intermediate-tier weapon?" Everyone was petrified by what they had just seen.

While they knew that venturing into the searing lava would be dangerous, they had thought that they would at least be able to last for a decent period of time without sustaining any damage with their Saint realm cultivation. However, upon seeing this sight, they realized that they had been severely underestimating the dangers of the lava!

The head of the Yunxu Master Teacher Academy, Wo Tianqiong, hesitated for a brief moment before exclaiming in astonishment, "That is... Earth Core Lava!"

"Earth Core Lava?"

The term was foreign to the crowd, so they directed questioning gazes toward Wo Tianqiong, gesturing for him to continue on.

"I have read books on volcanoes in the past, and it is stated that the temperature of lava grows higher and higher the deeper one goes. Of them, the lava that boasts the greatest heat is the Earth Core Lava. With just a single drip, it can melt Spirit-tier artifacts and even Saint-tier artifacts! While the one before us doesn't harness as much heat as that, it is clear that the heat it possesses is far beyond that of ordinary lava. Most likely, what lies on the other side of the lava pool isn't the ancient domain but an earth core!" Wo Tianqiong analyzed.

"This..." The crowd frowned.

"Regardless of whether that is true or not, we will know once we take a look!" Wu shi said. "You all wait here for a moment; I will head down to take a look."

"Given how hot the lava at the surface is, the heat you will have to face beneath is bound to be even more frightening. Will you be fine?" Guild Leader Han asked worriedly.

"I ran a rough calculation earlier, and with my current cultivation, I should be able to venture around a hundred meters in. Don't worry, I will rush out the moment I sense any danger." Wu shi nodded grimly. "We will be stuck here if we don't try to do anything. At this rate, it is just a matter of time before we succumb as well."

While they were flying above the vent, placing them some distance away from the lava, the heat that they had to endure was still considerable due to the seal above them locking the heat in. For the time being, they were still able to endure it through their zhenqi, but it would only be a matter of time before they ran out of zhenqi and succumbed to the heat.

"You're right. Be careful then..." Knowing that Wu shi was right, Guild Leader Han hesitated for a moment before nodding.

"Un, I will be fine," Wu shi replied with a smile.

The next moment, his face suddenly turned grim as he drove the zhenqi in his body furiously. An incredible aura burst forth, and it warped into the form of a majestic dragon. Then, his figure abruptly dashed downward, heading toward the lava.

Huala!

Parting the lava beneath him with forceful might, Wu shi dived in.

"Ah..." Zhang Xuan hadn't expected Wu shi to move so quickly. He had intended to persuade the latter against it, given the unknown dangers that could have been lurking beneath the lava, but he had been a little too slow.

After a moment of hesitation, he decided to swallow his words. Perhaps, this might be for the best. He still hadn't made sense out of the situation yet, and perhaps Wu shi might be able to uncover new clues for them.

Gugugugu!

It took only an instant for the lava to fill the opening that Wu shi had made earlier. Nevertheless, the bubbles that surfaced continuously indicated that there was someone moving beneath the surface.

Seeing the sight below, a combat master couldn't help but ask worriedly, "Will he be fine?"

"On top of being a Saint 4-dan expert, Wu shi is also a capable master teacher who possesses many means. Even if he meets with danger, it shouldn't be too difficult for him to flee back up," Guild Leader Han replied after a moment of hesitation.

To reassure the others, his words were confident. However, he

was still unable to fully conceal the worry in his eyes.

Clearly, even he had no way of saying for sure whether Wu shi would be fine or not.

"Don't worry, Wu shi might not be strongest cultivator of our Qingyuan Empire Master Teacher Pavilion, but he is definitely the one who wields the most life preservation means. This is also why our Master Teacher Pavilion decided to dispatch him for this expedition," Mu shi said with a smile.

"Life preservation means?" Everyone was bewildered.

"Indeed. Wu shi cultivates a unique movement technique known as the 'Star Weaving Steps'. Through it, he can move at speeds comparable to even Saint 5-dan Leaving Aperture realm experts. While it does deplete his zhenqi swiftly, there is no doubt that it is an invaluable asset in times of danger!

"As searing as the lava beneath is, with Wu shi's strength and means, escaping safely shouldn't be a problem for him. Besides, since the master of the ancient domain has left a Life Gate on the seal for us to enter, it didn't make sense for him to try to kill us right afterwards."

The eyes of the crowd lit up in realization, and they heaved a sigh of relief.

Indeed! If even a 7-star pinnacle master teacher would be scorched to death right after entering the lava, wasn't this ancient domain a little too difficult?

If that was the case, how could You Xu have gotten out alive?

Besides, there was no reason for the elder who had created the ancient domain to design it in such a manner if he was just trying to kill them.

Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

The other party's thoughts were similar to his.



Since the master of the ancient domain had left a visible opening to the ancient domain, it was clear that they intended for others to enter it. The trials were dangerous and difficult to clear, but there would definitely be a solution.

Hu!

Around eight minutes later, just when everyone was starting to panic, a loud explosion sounded from the lava, and a figure darted back up.

"Wu shi..." The crowd hurriedly turned their gazes over, and upon seeing what was before them, their eyebrows leaped up in astonishment.

Wu shi was in a completely different state compared to before he entered the lava. The clothes on his body had disintegrated, leaving him stark naked. If not for the massive dragon he had formed using his zhenqi that was concealing various parts of his body, he might have just died of embarrassment on the spot.

However, his clothes being reduced to ash was just the least of the worries. More importantly, his face was completely pale, and he was panting heavily, as if he had just fled from something extremely fearsome.

There were even some portions of his skin that were charred black, creating a particularly gruesome sight.

Guild Leader Han hurried forward and asked, "What happened?"

On the other hand, Wu shi swiftly swallowed a pill to recuperate his zhenqi before putting on another set of clothes from his storage ring.

"The temperature within the lava is higher than I thought," Wu shi explained with a bitter smile. "I swiftly ventured downward as soon as I entered. I thought that with my stamina and zhenqi, reaching the hundred-meter mark wouldn't be an issue for me. However... the temperature increased faster than I thought it

would. By the time I reached the thirty-meter mark, I could already feel myself approaching my limit. The rate at which my zhenqi was depleting from fending away the lava was already double the rate when I was at the surface!

"With great difficulty, I managed to reach the forty-meter mark. However, by then, my zhenqi had already depleted by half. Knowing that it would be difficult for me to return if I were to venture any deeper, I decided to turn around at that point and rush back. Nevertheless, I still nearly depleted my zhenqi and died inside!"

"Even you were only able to reach the forty-meter mark?" Wo Tianqiong was astonished.

Wu shi's strength was the greatest of them all, and yet, he had only been able to venture forty meters deep into the lava. Through this, it wasn't too difficult to imagine how fearsome the lava was.

"Did you notice anything?" Guild Leader Han probed.

Wu shi shook his head. "It is nothing but lava below; I wasn't able to see anything at all. Furthermore, there was a powerful pressure crushing down on me below, limiting my Spiritual Perception to only ten meters. Anything more than that is beyond my means. I tried to peer downward when I was at the forty meters mark, and based on what I saw, it seems like there is still a very long distance away before reaching the end of the lava."

"Your Spiritual Perception can only extend to ten meters?"

"There is still a long distance away before reaching the end?"

The faces of the crowd warped in horror.

Wu shi was the one who possessed the strongest cultivation in the expedition team, and even Guild Leader Han wouldn't be a match for him.

Yet, an expert of his caliber could only extend his Spiritual Perception ten meters into the lava. Just how long would it take

for them to scan the enormous volcano that had a diameter of ten kilometers?

Furthermore, if the entrance of the ancient domain was truly located within the lava... would they really be able to enter it?

"Indeed. When I was at the surface, my Spiritual Perception could still extend several hundred meters away. However, the deeper I went, the greater the constraint on my Spiritual Perception. Eventually, when I reached my limit, forty meters deep, I could only extend it ten meters." Wu shi shook his head.

"If you could only persist for forty meters, and there was still a long distance to go before reaching the other side... how are we going to find the entrance to the ancient domain like that?"

The crowd glanced at one another with helpless looks on their faces.

After waiting for the opening of the seal for so long, were they going to be stuck right before the entrance, unable to do a thing at all?

Just as everyone was overwhelmed with despair from being unable to venture any further, someone among the crowd suddenly shouted, "Sh\*t, the opening to the seal has closed up, too!"

Everyone hurriedly turned around to take a look, only to see that the light barrier had reverted back to its initial white color. The seven-colored bridge from a moment ago had also vanished from sight, as if signifying the complete closure of the seal.

## Chapter 1030: The Fearsome Lava (2)

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One of the master teachers tried to pass through the light barrier as he had done before, but as if ramming into a wall of concrete steel, he was knocked back by a powerful might.

"This..." The eyes of the master teacher narrowed in disbelief. "How are we to leave now?"

He wasn't the only who reacted in such a manner. There were also several other master teachers who rushed up to the seal to try it too, and upon realizing that they were unable to pass through it as well, their faces paled in horror.

Passing through the seven-colored light barrier from before had been extremely easy for them. It was just like diving into water, not impeding them at all. However, the current white, misty barrier before them was like a thick block of steel in their path; no matter how they rammed at it, it just wouldn't budge.

In other words, they were completely trapped! If they couldn't find the way to advance into the ancient domain, they would be trapped there with the lava until the next opening of the seal, provided they could survive till then.

"No wonder you told us that we might face great peril in the expedition, the ancient domain is indeed fearsome," one of the master teachers muttered to himself.

Before they joined the expedition, Wu shi and the others had repeatedly warned them that great peril lay in the expedition of the ancient domain, and they could very well meet their death there. Back then, they had thought that it was just an exaggeration, and they had not thought much of it.

In the end, before they had even entered the ancient domain, they had already found themselves helplessly lost. If that was the case, it was difficult to imagine the sheer extent of danger they

would face in the ancient domain.

Guild Leader Han shook his head and said, "I said earlier that the seal would close within fifteen minutes. It is impossible to open it once more. The only choice we have now is to trudge forward!

"It is pointless to dwell on this matter anymore. All of us joined this expedition knowing that we would face such dangerous situations. At this point, the only thing we can do is find the entrance to the ancient domain."

"Un." The crowd nodded.

Having been warned of the dangers from participating in the expedition, most of the expedition members had already prepared in case something unfortunate befell them in the midst of exploring the ancient domain. Since it was already impossible for them to back out at this point, they could only muster their courage and advance forward.

Understanding the same logic, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze back to the lava. At the same time, he forged a remote communication with the Myriad Anthive Queen.

Before long, the Myriad Anthive Queen replied, "Master, there is no folded space in the area. Even if there is one, it is most likely beneath the lava, where I am unable to sense it."

"There is no folded space in the area?" Zhang Xuan's expression turned stern.

Could it be that the entrance to the ancient domain really lay beneath the lava?

But even Wu shi was unable to venture too far down, let alone them!

It was only the entrance of the ancient domain they were at, surely it wasn't designed to be so difficult?

If that was truly the case, how did the old principal and his team

managed to enter the ancient domain back then?

It is a pity that I failed to obtain the map from the Poison Hall, or else we wouldn't be in such a helpless position now. Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly.

If he had managed to obtain the map, he would have been able to find the route in easily. He wouldn't have been in such a difficult position at the moment.

Forget it, there is no point brooding over it now. I should try to use the Library of Heaven's Path and see if I can find anything instead. Tossing away those negative thoughts in his mind, Zhang Xuan descended toward the lava.

As the lava was a non-living object, it couldn't possibly utilize battle techniques or that sort. Thus, the only way to make the Library of Heaven's Path to compile a book on it was through touch.

Seeing Zhang Xuan flying toward the lava, Mu shi couldn't help but exclaim in shock, "Senior Uncle, what are you doing?"

Knowing that he couldn't reveal the matter regarding the Library of Heaven's Path, Zhang Xuan waved his hand and said, "I am just taking a closer look at the lava."

A moment later, he was standing right above the lava. An intense wave of heat assaulted him, penetrating through his skin to sear even his bones, seemingly intent on reducing him to a crisp.

Scorching! Zhang Xuan's eyes narrowed in astonishment.

It was no wonder Wu shi was only able to venture forty meters in. The temperature in the area was far more frightening than he could have imagined. Even if he were to exert his full strength, thirty meters would probably be his limit.

Driving his Heaven's Path zhenqi, Zhang Xuan expelled the heat out of his body before extending his hand toward the lava.

Flaws! Zhang Xuan willed.

Hu!

A book materialized in the Library of Heaven's Path.

"This lava is made out of rocks melted under the heat of the earth flames. It harnesses great heat within. It is made out of Bluedark Rock, Granite, Lapis, and many other minerals. Once solidified, it is an ideal material to construct a house..."

Upon reading the description in the book, Zhang Xuan staggered and nearly fell to the ground.

Construct a house... Construct your head!

That is not what I want to know, alright?

As stifled as Zhang Xuan felt within, it was somewhat within his expectations. The Library of Heaven's Path could only analyze the very item that he was touching at that instant and reveal its details.

This was similar to the many times he had attempted to collect multiple books into the Library of Heaven's Path simultaneously through touching the bookshelves, only to receive information on the material of the bookshelf instead.

Similarly, touching the lava only reflected the unique properties of the lava and not the flaws of the entire volcano.

In other words, the seemingly omnipotent Library of Heaven's Path was useless in this situation.

What could he do?

Rubbing his glabella in frustration, Zhang Xuan had no choice but to return to the others.

Seeing that even the miracle-producing Principal Zhang had been forced to retreat helplessly from the lava, disappointment surfaced in the eyes of Guild Leader Han. Sighing deeply, he instructed, "If it comes down to it, we will just have to allocate a region to each

person and explore the lava pool bit by bit. Since the seal can be opened, I figure that the ancient domain shouldn't be located too deep into the lava. As long as we work together, we should be able to find some clues about the ancient domain's location!"

"Explore the lava pool bit by bit?" With grave expressions, the crowd nodded.

This was the only measure they could take at the moment.

Since there was no formation or anything hidden above the lava, there was a very good chance that the ancient domain was hidden beneath the lava. With no other alternatives at that moment, they could only comb the lava inch by inch, praying that they would find something soon.

"If... the ancient domain is located beyond forty meters beneath the surface of the lava, what should we do?" the head of Luoqing Master Teacher Academy, Shen Pingchao, asked with a deep frown.

Upon hearing those words, the crowd couldn't help nod in agreement as well.

Since even Wu shi was only able to reach forty meters deep, there was no way they could go beyond that. It would be great if they could find the ancient domain within the top forty meters of the lava, but if it was located beneath that point, there was no way they would be able to find it!

At this point, Luo Ruoxin spoke up as well. "Combing the area isn't a feasible solution."

Guild Leader Han turned to Luo Ruoxin and asked, "Oh? Does Luo shi have a suggestion to offer?"

"Just as the others have said, if the ancient domain is located more than forty meters beneath the surface of the lava, there is no way we will be able to find it. Furthermore, considering the sheer scale of the lava vent and how there are only thirty of us here, how



long do you think it will take us to finish combing the area?" Luo Ruoxin said with a frown.

"This..." Guild Leader Han was stumped.

While most of the expedition members did possess Spiritual Perception, Wu shi had said earlier that its range of effectiveness would gradually be compressed the further one delved into the lava.

Furthermore, they would be unable to stay within the lava for extended periods of time either. At this rate, they would probably run out of zhenqi and succumb to the heat before they were able to find the ancient domain.

"What should we do then?" one of the master teachers asked.

"I am not too sure either. However, since the master of the ancient domain left a Life Gate in the seal for others to enter, there is bound to be a route that we can take; it is just that we haven't thought of it yet. As the saying goes, the sharpening of the axe is the key to woodcutting 1 . Instead of fumbling around, it would be better for us to first identify our goal before making a move. That should heighten our chances of success," Luo Ruoxin said.

The crowd nodded in agreement.

She was right. Spreading their net thin in hopes of striking lucky was a luxury they couldn't afford.

The circumstances they were in were simply too poor. Persisting for an hour, two hours, or ten hours was still doable for them. However, beyond a day, the fire poison would probably start to set in. Two days, and they would already be too feeble from the constant assault of the heat to search the area, and it wouldn't be too long before they were reduced to dried meat.

"Indeed. We have to first have a concrete idea in mind before carrying it out." Zhang Xuan nodded as he turned his gaze back to the lava once more.

The volcano vent was circular in shape, and at irregular intervals, a powerful spurt of lava would burst forth and strike the seal above them, creating a deafening explosion.

It was fortunate that they had released the energies accumulated in the seal before, or else there was no doubt that the powerful spurt of lava would have induced a huge explosion within here.

A thought suddenly surfaced in Zhang Xuan's head. Could the key be related to... the strength of these lava spurts?

He was certain that the old principal and You Xu didn't have to go through so much effort to enter the ancient domain. Based on You Xu's testimony, the group back then had encountered an energy storm as soon as they stepped through the light barrier, and it was then that You Xu had been swept into an unknown area and met with the Otherworldly Demons.

Energy storm... In other words, when they first entered, the seal was permeated with an overwhelmingly powerful force.

Could the 'energy storm' have been referring to the energies released during the opening of the seal?

If that was the case, it would mean that, while his earlier release of the energies had made the insides of the seal significantly safer, it had also effectively terminated their route to the entrance of the ancient domain.

Wait, if that is the case... does it mean that the area where the energies would have burst forth from during the opening of the seal is the area where the entrance of the ancient domain is located?

If You Xu wasn't lying, that could very well be the case.

With such thoughts in mind, Zhang Xuan hurriedly turned his gaze toward the lava to examine it closely.

Coincidentally, a burst of energy surged forth from the lava at this moment. It came into contact with the area where his

formation flag was planted previously, and it disappeared without a trace.

The point where he had planted the flag was where the greatest opening of the seal was located, and it prevented any energies from building up within the seal. As a result, the lava was relatively calmer, such that he had even forgotten about this matter himself.

I should give it a try! Zhang Xuan nodded in resolution.

Regardless of whether his conclusion was correct or not, the only way he could know for sure was to test it out personally. And honestly speaking, he couldn't think of anything else other than that.

The Library of Heaven's Path doesn't work on the lava, so the only way I can really check on it is to venture in. Wu shi is still in the midst of recuperating from his previous exertion, so I can only do it personally!

Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist, and a huge cauldron appeared before him.

The Golden Origin Cauldron!

With the previous breakthrough, that fellow had already become a Saint intermediate-tier artifact, granting it strength on par with Saint 4-dan pinnacle experts. While its fighting prowess might pale in comparison to veteran experts like Wu shi, in terms of resistance to heat, the latter definitely came nowhere close to matching it.

The abrupt action from Zhang Xuan drew gazes from the crowd to him. Upon taking a look, they couldn't help but freeze in astonishment.

"The Golden Origin Cauldron... has become a Saint intermediate-tier artifact?"

Most of them were aware of the existence of the famed Guardian Saint Artifact of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, but

according to what they knew, it should only have been a Saint low-tier artifact. When did it advance to intermediate-tier?

There might only be a minor tier difference between low-tier and intermediate-tier, but the power disparity between the two was immense, as if the gap between heaven and earth.

"A blacksmith student whom Master took in on a whim yesterday night helped reforge my magnificent body, and in the midst of doing so, I advanced to intermediate-tier. What? Are you all envious?"

Seeing the shocked gazes directed toward it, the Golden Origin Cauldron burst into hearty laughter, and with blatant glee in its voice, it continued boasting.

"There is really no need for you all to envy me. It is only due to my outstanding talent that I am able to achieve breakthroughs so easily. The likes of you can't possibly hope to emulate my greatness."

# Chapter 1031: Entering the Lava

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"Shut up!" Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up.

"Roger that!" Hearing the bellow from its master, the Golden Origin Cauldron immediately fell silent, not daring to say another word.

Even though it had halted its words halfway through, the content that it had revealed thus far was more than enough for the others to make sense of the situation. Their gazes couldn't help but drift to Zhang Xuan.

"Took in an apprentice as his blacksmith student on a whim?"

"Reforge the Golden Origin Cauldron? Principal Zhang, what is going on?"

As a Saint low-tier artifact, it would at least take the strength of a 7-star blacksmith to reforge it and raise its grade. Yet, an apprentice that he had taken in as his blacksmith student on a whim had actually reforged it? What was going on?

A blacksmith apprentice... was someone who hadn't even passed the 1-star blacksmith examination yet, right? How could such a person help to reforge a Saint low-tier artifact?

"Last night, I met an apprentice who was trying to end his life..." Noting everyone's gaze on him, Zhang Xuan began explaining the matter that had happened the previous night. It was no secret anyway, so there was no need for him to hide it.

"An apprentice who couldn't even smith a Mortal-tier weapon was actually able to upgrade the Golden Origin Cauldron with just an hour of guidance from you?"

"T-this... Surely that is impossible." Hearing the story, the crowd felt incredibly frenzied.

To actually guide an apprentice in reforging his Saint low-tier

artifact... Just how confident did one have to be to dare do such a thing?

Just how deep of an understanding of smithing did one have to command to be capable of pulling off such a feat?

"I have long heard that Principal Zhang possesses incredible smithing mastery, but this... it seems like I have still been underestimating him."

"Indeed. Just by this feat alone, it can be seen that his grasp over smithing is on par with 7-star pinnacle blacksmiths."

"How can we ever expect to match up with that?"

The principals of the other three Master Teacher Academies couldn't help but sigh bitterly at this point.

They had learned from Zhao Bingxu's words that the young man before them possessed an astounding mastery of smithing. All along, they had thought that 6-star pinnacle would be the cap, especially considering the other party's young age. However, upon hearing this, they realized that they had been taking Zhang Xuan too lightly.

One must know that even a real 7-star pinnacle blacksmith couldn't possibly guide an apprentice into successfully reforging a Saint low-tier artifact!

Different from what the others were focused on, Luo Ruoxin looked at the young man before her with widened eyes and asked, "You... After parting from me, you saved a person and tore away the hypocritical mask of an elder of the Blacksmith Guild?"

Zhang Xuan nodded. "Un. I was intending to follow you after you left, but it was then that I saw someone attempting to end his life. It was due to this incident that I eventually came late!"

"I see..." Luo Ruoxin shook her head helplessly.

She had thought that the other party was pig-headed when he

didn't pursue her the previous night, and she had even flown into a rage over it. However, it seemed like she had misunderstood the other party.

As a master teacher, protecting the sanctity and dignity of teaching was clearly more important than one's own personal matters.

Nevertheless, despite knowing that he had been misunderstood, he didn't use this matter as an excuse to justify himself. Had it not been for the Golden Origin Cauldron bragging about the matter, she would probably have remained ignorant of it. His character was truly worthy of respect.

Not dwelling on the matter, Zhang Xuan turned to the crowd and explained, "I am guessing that the ancient domain might be located at the crux of where the energy is being released from in the lava. Thus, I intend to head in to take a look."

"The crux of where the energy is being released from?"

The crowd frowned.

"Considering the rampaging energies that are bound to be at the crux, even if there is a formation or folded space there, it would have been destroyed long ago. How could the ancient domain possibly be constructed there?" Guild Leader Han remarked.

He had taken that point into his analysis as well, and it was also the first possibility that he had eliminated.

The energies that had accumulated in the lava were so great that should an explosion occur, everything within a radius of a thousand kilometers would be reduced to ashes. Under the constant assault of such a powerful force, even the stablest of folded spaces or formations would have been destroyed long ago!

"I can't deny that, but the very energy that could be used to destroy the formation could also be used to sustain it! There are strengths and weaknesses to it, and with our limited

understanding of formations, there is no way we can make a conclusive judgement on the matter. The only way to find out is to head down ourselves," Zhang Xuan replied with a wave of his hand.

"This..." Guild Leader Han's mouth opened to refute Zhang Xuan's words, but to his surprise, he found that the other party's words were logical as well.

As the saying goes, 'water can float a boat or sink it'. A powerful might could destroy the formation, but if a formation master could tap into it well, it could also become a powerful source of energy that further reinforced the might of the formation.

Of course, that would be a matter for higher ranked formation masters to frustrate over. With their current level of proficiency, it was still too far away for them.

"Alright, I will be going in to take a look!"

After explaining the matter, Zhang Xuan beckoned the Golden Origin Cauldron over and leaped into its body.

With the massive size of the Golden Origin Cauldron, it could easily house three to four people in it without trouble. Thus, Zhang Xuan could hide within it while exploring the depths of the lava.

Zhang Xuan did consider sending the Golden Origin Cauldron alone—that would have been much safer for him—but considering the unreliable nature of the cauldron, it was questionable whether it would be able to provide him with any useful information or not. Thus, he decided to make the trip down personally.

Seeing Zhang Xuan leap into the cauldron, Luo Ruoxin couldn't help but exclaim worriedly, "Be careful!"

"Un." Zhang Xuan flashed Luo Ruoxin a smile before fully entering the Golden Origin Cauldron.

"Here I go!" With an excited exclamation, the Golden Origin



Cauldron began charging toward the area where the energies in the lava were originating from.

The previous blast of energy had just occurred a moment ago, and judging from the past occurrences, there would be a ten minutes interval before the next one. He could make use of this interval to dive in. Otherwise, if they were caught in the explosion, it was questionable if the Golden Origin Cauldron would be able to take the impact.

Gugugugu!

As soon as the massive cauldron descended into the lava, bubbles began popping up at the surface. Seated within the cauldron, Zhang Xuan felt heat assaulting him from all directions.

The Golden Origin Cauldron was a weapon cauldron, specially forged to retain heat so that it could melt even the most durable of metals. Given so, it was inevitable that heat would seep into the cauldron from the surroundings. While Zhang Xuan wouldn't come into direct contact with the lava by hiding within the Golden Origin Cauldron, given the sealed environment that he was in, the heat he would have to endure was nowhere beneath the heat outside.

Zhang Xuan began driving his Heaven's Path zhenqi, and the heat assaulting him alleviated significantly. A moment later, he stood up and said, "Ding Ding, stop!"

"Here?" The Golden Origin Cauldron was taken aback.

They had barely entered the lava, not having even ventured ten meters deep. To stop at this point... why?

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded. "There is no need to go too deep... Wait here for me!"

After saying those words, Zhang Xuan drew out his soul from his glabella and slipped into the lava.

While the Golden Origin Cauldron had raised its cultivation

significantly, its limit was unlikely to be much more than forty meters. Furthermore, it was also doubtful if he would be able to tolerate the heat while hiding within the Golden Origin Cauldron if they were to venture too deep. In truth, the reason he had gotten the Golden Origin Cauldron to enter the lava with him was to protect his physical body.

His true goal was to venture in the lava with his soul!

Due to the intangible nature of souls, while his soul would still be affected by the immense heat of the lava, the extent to which he was affected was significantly lower as compared to that of his physical body. Furthermore, he could also move freely around the area without being affected by the crushing pressure of the lava, allowing him to dive deeper and possibly uncover more secrets.

Indeed, it is as I expected! By entering the lava, not only is my soul undamaged by the heat, I can even absorb the surrounding energy to strengthen it! Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

As his soul was cultivated through the Heaven's Path Soul Art, he didn't suffer from Searing Yang Decline like other souls would, making him near impervious to heat. Had it been any other soul oracle, putting aside entering the lava, their soul would have already dissipated into nothingness just from the heat inside the cauldron!

This heat is ideal for refining weapons and ridding the impurities within. Could it be used to temper my soul too?

While a soul was intangible, just like Primordial Spirits, they were very much existent in this world. Since this heat could refine weapons, perhaps it could refine a soul as well?

I should give it a try.

Thus, leaving his soul floating freely in the lava, he began absorbing the heat from the surroundings slowly.

Tzzzzzzzz!

A searing surge of energy began gushing into Zhang Xuan's soul. Under the tempering of the intense heat, his soul began to grow stronger and stronger. Just like he had imagined, the impurities contained within his soul were also being expelled continuously.

As I expected, it works!

He had been thinking that his soul was a little too bloated all along, making it a little troublesome for him to squeeze into his body. He had been wanting to refine it for a while now, but he hadn't been able to find a way to do so. The immense heat within the lava happened to be an ideal opportunity for him to do so.

However, this isn't the time for me to cultivate yet. While my soul might be unaffected by the burst of energies that occur once every ten minutes, the same cannot be said about the Golden Origin Cauldron. There is a chance that it could be blasted away by the sheer might of it, and that will pose significant trouble to me.

Even though Zhang Xuan wanted to cultivate and temper his soul, he knew that this wasn't the right time for him to do so. Thus, he stopped what he was doing and began diving further into the lava.

The most important thing for him to do at the moment was find the entrance to the ancient domain. As for cultivation, he would have plenty of opportunities to do so later on.

Just as Wu Shi had said, the temperature grew higher and higher the further he ventured downward. Every ten meters he descended, the heat in the surroundings intensified significantly.

According to my calculations, the limit for Saint 1-dan cultivators is ten meters, the limit for Saint 2-dan cultivators is twenty meters, so on and so forth. As a Saint 4-dan expert, the limit for Wu Shi is forty meters. Anything further is beyond his scope of abilities!

Zhang Xuan's soul ventured downward swiftly. In just a few

breaths, he had already reached the forty-meter mark. Upon sensing the change in the temperature at this boundary, he came up with a deduction.

The forty-meter mark sure is warm. Even in my soul state, it is still a little hard to bear.

The previous thirty meters had not posed much of a threat to his soul, but as soon as he reached the forty-meter mark, the heat around him suddenly intensified greatly. The relentless assault of blazing heat was difficult for even his soul to withstand.

Continue on!

Driving his Heaven's Path Soul Art to alleviate the heat, Zhang Xuan broke the forty-meter mark and continued diving deeper.

As soon as he treaded beyond the forty-meter mark, he suddenly felt as if he had been thrown into a pot of oil. Despite the superior durability of his soul, it still began distorting out of shape under the assault of the overwhelming heat, seemingly ready to dissipate very soon.

Zhang Xuan's face darkened. This isn't working. This is a region that only Leaving Aperture realm experts are able to enter. Even in my soul form, I am already at my limit.

He had been thinking of venturing deeper in the lava by utilizing the inherent advantage of his soul's resistance to heat. However, from the looks of it, it seemed like he had underestimated how hot the lava was.

Considering how even a Saint 4-dan Primordial Spirit realm master teacher had nearly succumbed at the forty-meter mark, it was already rather incredible that his Transcendent Mortal 9-dan soul could come this far as well.

Enduring the pain, Zhang Xuan tried to trudge on forcefully, but upon crossing the fifty-meter mark, he felt that his soul was starting to dissipate. He was at his limit.

An increase in temperature signified an increase in the activity of a material at its fundamental level, thus making its existing structure unstable. This was similar to how solid weapons melted into metallic fluids under intense heat.

Souls couldn't exactly be considered a material, but when the temperature grew too high, even space itself would become unstable, let alone a mere soul.

Alarmed, Zhang Xuan hurriedly retreated back to the fifty-meter mark, and only then did he finally feel the dissipation of his soul stopping. At this point, he couldn't help but frown in distress.

I have already reached the fifty-meter mark, but the ancient domain is still nowhere to be seen. Could it be that my deduction is wrong and it is not located here?

He had come this far, but there was nothing to be seen. The only thing that was notable was the progressively increasing temperature. Just as Wo Tianqiong had said earlier, he was probably coming close to the Earth Core Lava.

At a place as warm as that, even formation flags would melt and folded spaces would collapse. Could he really have been wrong?

While Zhang Xuan was in the midst of contemplating, a rumbling suddenly echoed from beneath like a huge machine coming into life.

With narrowed eyes, Zhang Xuan saw an immense energy blasting straight in his direction.

Sugar! Why did the energies burst prematurely this time around? This is bad, really bad...

# Chapter 1032: Great Heaven Reversal Formation

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That force was powerful and ferocious. Reminiscent of a rampaging tsunami, before Zhang Xuan could do anything, it was already right before him.

He hurriedly turned around to flee, but right when he was about to do so, the ferocious energy tore a line right through the lava, and at the very end, rows after rows of buildings came into sight. In that moment, Zhang Xuan felt as if he was seeing a mirage.

It is indeed below the lava. Barely after this thought surfaced in Zhang Xuan's mind, he felt an overwhelming force crushing down on him. Unable to withstand it, he ended up tumbling his way up.

Hong long!

Following which, he saw the Golden Origin Cauldron, swept by the immense force, blasting forcefully out of the lava, striking heavily onto the seal. A resounding chime reverberated in the air.

It was fortunate that the fellow had advanced to Saint intermediate-tier earlier, and he had released the accumulated energies beforehand. Otherwise, this single strike could have killed both the Golden Origin Cauldron and his body within.

"Principal Zhang!"

"Zhang shi!"

"Senior Uncle!"

Seeing the Golden Origin Cauldron being knocked out by the violent spurt of lava, the crowd that had been waiting outside for Zhang Xuan leaped in shock. They hurriedly rushed toward the Golden Origin Cauldron to check on their condition.

This is bad! Zhang Xuan's eyes narrowed in alarm.

Only his physical body was in the cauldron at the moment. If he attempted to return under such conditions, the master teachers, with their superior eyes of discernment, would surely notice that he was a soul oracle. Once that happened, he would be in deep trouble!

If it was discovered that the esteemed principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy practiced the arts of the heinous soul oracles, how would others view him?

But if his soul didn't return to his body, his body would remain cold and lifeless, no different from a corpse. If those fellows thought that he had died and attempt to cremate him... it would be too late for tears then!

To make matters worse, his body possessed the ability of Mind of Void. It would react instinctively before danger, so if any of them tried to cremate him, his body would immediately move to stop them. If his body were to end up killing a couple of them in that state...

Zhang Xuan's head was already hurting just from thinking of it.

Anxious, he was considering if he should just try his luck and charge out of the lava. Perhaps, he might be able to return to his body before anyone noticed him. However, in the end, he changed his mind and sent a telepathic message to the Golden Origin Cauldron instead.

Wu shi and Guild Leader Han were Saint 4-dan Primordial Spirit realm experts. With a sweep of their Spiritual Perception, they would immediately notice the peculiar nature of his soul. Given so, the best and safest solution at hand was to have the Golden Origin Cauldron return to the lava.

"Ding Ding, come back!"

"No way, it's too dangerous down there..." The Golden Origin Cauldron shivered in fear.

You must be joking! Just staying down there for a few minutes nearly made my magnificent body shatter into bits. There is no way I am going to be so foolish as to go down once more to commit suicide.

On the other hand, seeing how a weapon cauldron was actually so fearful of death, Zhang Xuan felt so enraged that his lungs could burst from sheer fury.

What the heck is this? There are so many humans here who don't fear death, and yet, a Saint artifact like you ended up being the one who treats your life most precious.

Zhang Xuan was rendered speechless.

"As long as you come here, I will find a way to raise your cultivation to Leaving Aperture realm!" Left with no choice, Zhang Xuan could only attempt to lure it in with benefits.

While the Golden Origin Cauldron was fearful of death, it did have unquestionable loyalty to him. At times like this, if he could blind its fear with greed, it would be willing to do as he said.

"Leaving Aperture realm? Really?" The Golden Origin Cauldron leaped up in excitement.

There was a significant difference between the Leaving Aperture realm of Saint-tier artifacts and that of humans. While humans gained the ability to draw out their Primordial Spirit and exert overwhelming might, Saint-tier artifacts would have their spirits refined to a level comparable to Primordial Spirits. While its spirit would still be unable to leave its body and travel freely, it would gain the ability to control its form and sprout arms and legs.

Well, the sight of it was indeed rather bizarre and hideous, but nevertheless, it was a huge evolution for Saint-tier artifacts, a step toward them becoming independent beings.

"Don't worry, I always mean what I say!" Zhang Xuan said.

Raising the cultivation of a Saint-tier artifact wasn't easy, but it



wasn't entirely impossible. He still had the Black Goldcrystal Ore that he had obtained from the treasure left behind by Wu Yangzi. As long as he could fuse it into the Golden Origin Cauldron's body, he should be able to raise its cultivation further.

However, there were great difficulties in doing so as well. He would have to melt the Black Goldcrystal Ore entirely in order to fuse it perfectly with the Golden Origin Cauldron, but ordinary earth flames weren't capable of doing so. It was unknown if even the lava deeper beneath would be sufficient to do the job.

"Alright then!" Receiving Zhang Xuan's word, the Golden Origin Cauldron dived back into the lava with a piercing shrill before the other master teachers could surround it.

"This..." Seeing how the Golden Origin Cauldron was moving around boisterously, charging back into the lava right after being blasted out of it a moment ago, they couldn't help but fall into a daze.

Putong!

After the Golden Origin Cauldron entered the lava, Zhang Xuan hurriedly slipped back into his body before flying out of the cauldron to appear before everyone else.

"Zhang shi, are you fine?" the crowd asked worriedly.

"I'm alright!" Zhang Xuan shook his head. "When venturing below earlier, I saw quite a few buildings below. If I am not mistaken, the ancient domain is really right beneath there!"

"How deep is it?" Wu shi asked.

"This..." After a moment of thought, Zhang Xuan replied, "I am not too sure, but I estimate it to be around a hundred meters deep!"

Even though he had only caught a glimpse of it, it wasn't too difficult for him to estimate a distance with his sharp eye of discernment.

"A hundred meters?" The faces of the crowd warped in horror.

Wu shi had nearly died from trying to dive forty meters deep; a hundred meters was clearly an impossible mission for them!

If that was where the ancient domain truly was, then it made no difference to them at all, since there was no way they were going to be able to access it.

"Do you have any idea how we can reach it?" Wu shi asked Guild Leader Han, only to see the latter shaking his head with a bitter smile.

Even he had no way of venturing a hundred meters deep into the ancient domain.

At this moment, Zhang Xuan spoke hesitantly. "I do have an idea in mind..."

"Oh?" Many pairs of eyes immediately gathered on him.

"That lava spurt earlier is extremely powerful. At its full force, it is capable of parting the lava, creating a temporary passageway that we can pass through. That was also how I managed to see the buildings below as well. We could make use of this passageway to slip into the ancient domain!" Zhang Xuan said.

The passageway only opened up for a brief moment, but as long as they made ample preparations beforehand and charged in swiftly, it was entirely possible for them to pass through it!

"It is not a bad idea, but... I fear that it might be unfeasible!"

"Indeed! Just think of how powerful the lava spurt was; even the Golden Origin Cauldron was knocked out of it. To attempt to travel against that overwhelming force... that is an impossible feat!"

Guild Leader Han and Wu shi glanced at one another and shook their heads.

The idea was not bad, possibly the best one they had so far, but it was a pity that it couldn't possibly be executed.

In the face of the powerful surge of energies from beneath, they would already be considered lucky if they weren't torn to shreds from facing it head on. To attempt to travel a distance of a hundred meters against it... that was clearly an impossible feat.

Taking a step back, even if it was possible, it was likely to take up considerable time. If the lava were to cave in on them while they were in the midst of traveling downwards, they would, without the slightest doubt, die there and then.

"You are right in saying that traveling against that burst of energies is nearly impossible... However, what if we were to follow the burst of energies instead?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"Follow the burst of energies?" The crowd couldn't comprehend what Zhang Xuan was driving at.

That burst of energies originated from the depths of the lava, and it was headed up toward the seal. How were they supposed to follow the burst of energies down when they were traveling in the opposite direction?

Abruptly coming to a realization, Guild Leader Han asked, "Does Principal Zhang mean to gather the energy from the burst of energies through a unique formation and rebound it downward?"

"Indeed." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Guild Leader Han frowned. "But... that poses its dangers as well. Given how powerful that burst of energies is, if we fail to gather it well, it could very well result in a devastating explosion."

"Gather the energy from the burst of powers through a unique formation?"

"Rebound it downward?"

Hearing the conversation between the two, the crowd finally understood what was going on, and grim expressions surfaced on their faces.

They had witnessed the might of the burst of energies from the lava with their own eyes; it was overwhelmingly powerful. To gather it together and redirect it downward into the lava... it would be fine if they succeeded, but if they failed, considering the volatility of the energies contained within the burst, it could very well lead to a devastating explosion that would kill them on the spot.

"Do you have any other ideas then?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"I..." Guild Leader Han froze.

Considering that the lava was at least a hundred meters deep, there was indeed no easy way they could bypass it. The idea proposed by Principal Zhang could very well be the best one they had.

"The seal has already closed, so we can't back out anymore. If we fail to enter the ancient domain, death is the only possible outcome. Since we are already cornered as it is, why don't we take a gamble?" Zhang Xuan said.

The crowd nodded in agreement.

There were no other alternatives; they could only give it a try. They wouldn't last long if they didn't do anything.

"What do we do then?"

Having joined the expedition knowing that they might very well face death, it didn't take long for the group to make up their minds after some discussion. They hurriedly turned their gazes toward Zhang Xuan for instructions.

"Simple. Firstly, I need all of the grade-7 formation flags that you have. After that, pay close attention to my commands and move when I tell you to. We will be entering the Golden Origin Cauldron and charging through the lava pool in it," Zhang Xuan said.

As a Saint-tier artifact, the Golden Origin Cauldron was capable of expanding its size to a certain limit. At its largest, it could easily

house thirty men without its insides getting too cramped.

Considering how there was a significant disparity in the flying speed of the expedition members, it would be best for all of them to advance together within the Golden Origin Cauldron instead. Firstly, it would be safer. Secondly, they would be able to travel faster this way as well.

"Alright!" Hearing the arrangements, everyone nodded in agreement.

There were quite a few grade-7 formation flags among the expedition members, especially with Guild Leader Han. All in all, Zhang Xuan gathered roughly five hundred formation flags, and he couldn't help but nod in satisfaction.

It would probably be enough with so many of them.

The most important matter at hand was to find out how he could set up a formation that was capable of gathering and harnessing rampaging energies within it.

Considering the strength of the rampaging energies, the grade of the formation could not be too low. To be safe, the minimum requirement for it was grade-7 pinnacle.

"Guild Leader Han, you are the head of the Qingyuan Conferred Empire Formation Master Guild. Do you happen to have any formation books and blueprints on you?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"Formation books and blueprints? I do have quite a few of them." Guild Leader Han couldn't help but be taken aback by Zhang Xuan's request.

They were already going to set up the formation, so why was the other party suddenly asking him for books at this moment?

"I need to borrow them for a moment." Then, Zhang Xuan turned to the crowd and said, "If anyone else has any books regarding formation, pass them over to me as well. The formation that I am going to set up later will determine our life and death, so I dare not

take it lightly. Thus, I hope to do some last-minute reading in hopes of heightening the chances of success!"

"Alright!" Knowing the importance of the matter, the other master teachers hurriedly took out all of the books regarding formations that they had on them and passed them over.

As expected of the head of a Formation Master Guild, Han Xu did have a lot of books on him. Just the number of 7-star formation master books that he alone possessed was more than several thousand. Paired with those from the others, there were around ten thousand of them in total.

Zhang Xuan swiftly scanned through the books with his eyes, collecting them into the Library of Heaven's Path and compiling them to form a Heaven's Path Formation Art.

While his consciousness was immersed within the Library of Heaven's Path, trying to take in the vast knowledge contained in the 7-star Heaven's Path Formation Art, his body was flipping through those books one after another, acting as if he was studying them carefully.

Two hours later, he had finally succeeded in internalizing the 7-star Heaven's Path Formation Art.

"Alright, I am done studying. You can take back your books now!" Zhang Xuan said.

After which, he closed his eyes and began making calculations. Very soon, a formation surfaced in his mind.

Having studied the 7-star Heaven's Path Formation Art, it went without saying that his comprehension of formations had reached the level of 7-star pinnacle, perhaps even being on par with some 8-star primary stage formation masters.

With his current proficiency in formations, it wasn't too difficult for him to identify a fitting formation for the geographical terrain he was in.

The best formation to use in this situation is the grade-7 pinnacle Great Heaven Reversal Formation. However... Zhang Xuan frowned. The formation is highly demanding on one's soul. I am unable to set it up with my current strength.

Based on his calculations, the current problem that they were facing could be perfectly resolved by setting up a Great Heaven Reversal Formation. However, there was an issue with that. Due to the complexity of the formation, the soul of the formation master had to have reached a certain level before they could set it up. However, his soul cultivation was only at Transcendent Mortal 9-dan at the moment, a long way off from being able to set up the formation.

I won't be able to set up the formation, unless... I can advance my soul cultivation further.

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# Chapter 1033: The Appearance of the Ancient Domain

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His soul cultivation was only at Transcendent Mortal 9-dan at the moment. Being a soul oracle, his soul was indeed significantly stronger than most Saint realm cultivators, but it was still far too weak from being able to set up the Great Heaven Reversal Formation.

As a grade-7 pinnacle formation, it was designed with the capabilities of a Saint 4-dan Primordial Spirit realm expert in mind. While Zhang Xuan's soul possessed similar capabilities with a Primordial Spirit, it was a pity that his soul was still too weak at the moment.

Unless... he could raise the cultivation of his soul!

Of course, there was Guild Leader Han around, and there was no doubt that he did possess a sufficiently strong soul to set up the Great Heaven Reversal Formation. However, the situation was a little different here.

The formation flags had to be planted near the lava, but this meant that the formation flags would be at risk of melting. As such, the formation had to be set up swiftly just a few moments before the burst of energies. On top of that, the activation of the formation also had to be spot-on, with only just a single second of error allowed. These two feats were something that Guild Leader Han was incapable of.

Furthermore, Zhang Xuan would only have perfect control over the formation if he were to set it up himself. If the slightest error occurred, the burst of energies could end up missing the ancient domain, thus causing his efforts to end in vain. Perhaps, they might even lose their lives due to it.

Zhang Xuan looked at the crowd and said, "I have already



thought of how it could be set up, but I need to make some preparations. I will be entering the lava with Ding Ding to calculate the positioning of the flags. I might end up staying down there for quite some time, but I won't be in any danger, so there's no need to worry!"

He was intending to enter the lava to cultivate his soul, so it was likely that it would take a fair bit of time. Thus, there was a need for him to inform them in advance lest they dive down to look for him out of worry. That could end up being troublesome for him.

The crowd nodded.

After some discussion, Zhang Xuan's body entered the Golden Origin Cauldron once more, and the latter plopped forcefully into the lava.

The area that was chosen this time around was some distance away from the area where the burst of energies was triggered, so they wouldn't be in any danger.

Just like the before, the Golden Origin Cauldron stopped at around the ten-meter mark to hide from the Spiritual Perception of others. Right after all preparations were done, he was just about to draw out his soul when a thought flashed across his mind.

Hu!

An identical figure appeared in the cauldron.

His clone!

This place had the unique ability of refining one's soul, so it was a good opportunity to his clone to raise his strength as well.

After communicating for a bit, the clone also learned about the current situation, and his eyes lit up in excitement.

Huala!

His clone drew out his soul as well and said, "I will be going down to take a look!"

After saying those words, he dived down into the lava right away.

Seeing how swiftly that fellow ran away, Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly. He quickly dived down into the lava with his soul as well.

With his previous experience, he headed all the way down.

Twenty meters, thirty meters, forty meters...

In the blink of an eye, he reached the fifty-meter mark.

The higher the temperature, the greater the refining effect on one's soul. While the heat was rather unbearable for his soul at the fifty-meter mark, it allowed his soul to grow at the fastest rate possible as well.

Where's my clone? Coming to a halt, Zhang Xuan was just about to begin cultivating when he suddenly realized that the fellow who had left ahead of him was nowhere to be seen.

He quickly took a look around him, and only then did he realize that the other party had dived right down to the sixty-meter mark and was currently cultivating with his eyes tightly shut.

The searing heat in the surroundings flowed into the other party's soul, refining it further, resulting in his aura growing stronger and stronger.

He was actually able to reach the sixty-meter mark? Zhang Xuan's eyes widened in astonishment.

The soul of his clone had come from the same source as him. Despite using his full strength, he was only barely able to reach the fifty-meter marks. On the other hand, his clone was actually able to reach sixty meters.

Treating Wei Ruyan has depleted a fair portion of my soul essence, and the deposition of a fragment of my soul into the Mausoleum Tablet resulted in significant depletion as well. That fellow has been a little stronger than me from the start, and those

incidents have only served to widen the gap between us. Soon, Zhang Xuan managed to make sense out of the situation, and he couldn't help but sigh gloomily.

While he had recovered from those depletions eventually, his soul didn't manage to return to the wholesome state it had been before.

It was due to this that his clone's soul was able to progress way further than him.

Staring at his clone, Zhang Xuan suddenly felt a heavy pressure on his shoulders. No, this won't do. I have to hurry up and cultivate. Otherwise, how embarrassing it will be if I can't even match up to my clone?

While the others were busy dominating their clones, he was being dominated by his clone. This was unacceptable!

Closing his eyes, Zhang Xuan focused his attention on driving his Heaven's Path Soul Art, and the heat from the surroundings began to flow into his body. The searing heat gradually tempered his slowly dissipating soul, making it more condensed and powerful.

Gugugu!

Previously, in the Subterranean Gallery, Zhang Xuan had already gathered the soul cultivation techniques of many Otherworldly Demons to compile the Transcendent Mortal 9-dan Heaven's Path Soul Art, allowing his soul energy to reach 34,000,000 ding.

Under the refinement of the intense heat, his soul, which was larger than ten meters, was gradually being compressed, but the might it wielded was rising swiftly.

35,000,000 ding!

36,000,000 ding!

37,000,000 ding!

...

As time passed, the rate at which his strength rose increased faster and faster, and his aura was growing more powerful and heavier as well.

Kacha!

After some period of time, his soul finally broke through its limit and advanced from Transcendent Mortal 9-dan to Half-Saint.

I made a breakthrough? Zhang Xuan was astonished.

As he hadn't compiled the Half-Saint Heaven's Path Soul Art yet, he had thought that it should be impossible for him to achieve a breakthrough. Yet, who would have thought that he would be able to do it through the sheer heat of the lava?

It seemed like gauging the strength of a soul by its size wasn't the way to go. What was more important was to refine it. The higher the purity of one's soul, the more nimble and powerful it would be.

In a sense, this was similar to zhenqi as well.

After achieving a breakthrough, Zhang Xuan felt refreshed. Lowering his head to take a look, he noticed that his clone had already achieved a breakthrough. Furthermore, from the looks of it, it seemed like the other party had even reached Half-Saint intermediate stage.

Humph! Gritting his teeth, Zhang Xuan began flying over to the sixty-meter mark.

Previously, when he attempted to head toward the sixty-meter mark, he had felt a powerful strain on his soul, as if it would be torn apart at any moment. However, with the refinement of his soul, his soul had become far more durable than before, allowing it to withstand the intense heat easily.

Continue! Knowing that the only way he could catch up with his clone was to be strict with himself, Zhang Xuan didn't stop at just the sixty-meter mark. Instead, he proceeded on to the seventy-meter mark.

Upon reaching the seventy-meter mark, he felt his soul quivering once more as a powerful force threatened to rip his soul apart. Not daring to advance any further, Zhang Xuan sat down and continued refining his soul.

With the enhanced rate of refinement due to the stronger heat from the surroundings, Zhang Xuan was growing stronger at a rapid rate.

At the same time, his soul managed to compress down to ten meters.

If I can compress my soul below ten meters, my strength will surely be enhanced significantly.

The ten-meter mark was a significant demarcation point for a soul. Back then, he had accidentally crushed the Huanyu Empire's Cleansing Lake in an attempt to break through that bottleneck.

If he could use the heat to compress his soul below ten meters at this point, not only would it become easier for him to slip back into his body, his strength would also be boosted significantly.

As the searing heat circulated through his soul to refine it, Zhang Xuan felt as if someone had placed him amid the inferno of hell. The excruciating pain that he was suffering at the moment was so unbearable that he felt as if he could pass out at any moment.

However, clenching his jaws, he forced himself to hold on. Some time later, a loud buzz sounded from his soul.

His soul had been compressed back below ten meters, and his cultivation had also reached Half-Saint intermediate stage.

I succeeded!

Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up. He instinctively turned his gaze upward to take a look, but he realized that his clone wasn't there. Thus, he turned his gaze downward, and he realized that the other party, at some point, had overtaken him and arrived at the eighty-meter mark. The other party's eyes were closed, deep in cultivation. The

size of his soul was only at nine meters, an indication that he had reached Half-Saint advanced stage.

That fellow...

Not expect his clone to be even faster than him, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but feel a little anxious. He hurriedly dived further down as well.

Having compressed his soul back within the ten-meter mark, he was able to pass through the eighty-meter mark without any trouble.

Advancing ahead, Zhang Xuan went straight to the ninety-meter mark before he stopped to cultivate. This time, the rate at which his soul was being refined was extremely fast. Within just ten minutes, his soul had already been compressed down to nine meters as well. Knowing that his clone was bound to be faster than him, Zhang Xuan didn't bother sneaking the other party a glance anymore. Instead, he chose to focus all of his attention on his cultivation and continued on. Twenty minutes later, his soul reached eight meters, and his soul cultivation also reached Half-Saint pinnacle, ready to achieve a breakthrough at any moment.

At his current level, the heat at the ninety-meter mark was no longer sufficient for him. Thus, he dived further down, and as he had expected, his clone was already at the hundred-meter mark.

At this moment, the other party's cultivation was also at the same level as his, Half-Saint pinnacle. However, instead of cultivating, the other party was gazing downward, seemingly assessing something.

Perplexed, Zhang Xuan headed up to his clone's side and looked down as well. What he saw left him slightly stunned.

There was no lava beneath the hundred-meter mark. Instead, there was a massive barrier with innumerable buildings constructed within it, similar to what Zhang Xuan had seen earlier.

Is this the ancient domain? It is indeed below the lava! Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in excitement.

He had only gotten a glimpse of it earlier, so he had not been able to confirm whether what he had seen was only a mirage or not. However, with this, the doubts that he had been harboring before had finally been entirely dispelled.

The ancient domain they were looking for was indeed at the bottom of the lava.

But... given how deeply hidden this place was, how in the world did the old principal and the others manage to get in back then?

Zhang Xuan touched the barrier, and it felt extremely sturdy, just like the white mist barrier of the seal above. In its unopened state, it was impossible for him to break through it.

Floating along the seal, Zhang Xuan's eyebrows suddenly shot up in alarm.

The Otherworldly Demonic Tribe...

Within the seal, there were several Otherworldly Demons that were advancing alongside the buildings. Naturally, they were unable to sense the two souls spying on them from beyond the barrier.

These Otherworldly Demons each possessed a cultivation of Saint 1-dan, and the killing intent that they exuded was strong enough to leave any man petrified in fear.

What are they up to? Zhang Xuan frowned.

In order to reach the bottom of the lava, their group had to go through so much trouble, constructing the Great Heaven Reversal Formation to redirect the force of the burst of energies back downwards, in order to pass through the lava. Yet, this bunch of Saint 1-dan Otherworldly Demons had actually been able to enter the ancient domain? How?

And what were they up to?

After making a few turns, the Otherworldly Demons soon arrived at a relatively small square in the midst of all of the buildings.

At the center of the square was a square altar with a massive closed door on top. There was an exceptionally sturdy seal, driven by some kind of power, cast over the entire structure. Dozens of Otherworldly Demons were scattered around the structure, attempting to break open the seal.

Zhang Xuan turned his attention to the door at the center, and he immediately felt a devastatingly powerful heat being emanated from the depths of the door. Even in his current state, he could very well be reduced to cinders if he were to attempt to go close to it.

What pure energy! Could it be that the lava in the surroundings was caused by the heat emanated from the door?

Due to the extraordinary heat of the lava, their group had been thinking that the lava was linked straight to an earth core, where the Earth Core Lava could be found. However, from the looks of it, their deduction was wrong. Most likely, the hundred meters of lava was likely the product of that door!

Hualala!

While Zhang Xuan was still taken aback by this shocking discovery, a towering Otherworldly Demon that possessed an astounding cultivation of Saint 4-dan suddenly walked into the square. At his command, the surrounding Otherworldly Demons roared furiously and began launching a powerful wave of attacks on the seal.

Hong long!

A brilliant glow shone from the door, and a powerful burst of energies blasted up. At the same time, the seal grew slightly thinner.



That burst of energies... Zhang Xuan's face darkened.

That was the very same burst of energies that had left them deeply troubled but they were planning to make use of!

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# Chapter 1034: Crushed to Death

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To think that the devastating might that threatened to decimate everything within a radius of thousand kilometers would have originated from there!

Who would have thought that it was a result of the Otherworldly Demons' attempt to break the seal?

It was no wonder the burst of energies abruptly started acting up a few days ago. Most likely, those fellows had been trying to break the seal since then.

He recalled what he had heard from Mu shi and Wu shi, about how a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan master teacher keeping watch over the area noticed an Otherworldly Demon loitering around the seal.

That matter had left Zhang Xuan perplexed for some time, but upon seeing this sight, everything suddenly came together like pieces of a puzzle.

Most likely, the Otherworldly Demons knew that their attempts to break the seal would result in the accumulation of energies within the area, and naturally, if an explosion were to occur as a result of it, they would be the first ones to be annihilated, standing at the very center of the blast. Thus, they intentionally let out news to the local Master Teacher Pavilion regarding their activities in the area before continuing their attacks.

Naturally, when the local Master Teacher Pavilion learned about the problems occurring with the seal, they would have no choice but to step in and intervene. While their efforts did save countless lives living in the area, it would be doing the Otherworldly Demons a huge favor as well.

This also explained why the interval between each burst of energies was irregular as well.

To break the seal, the Otherworldly Demons were launching their attacks in waves, taking a short breather in between so as to recover their strength. Naturally, the short breather that they took couldn't possibly be exactly the same each time around.

If that's the case, it means that the Otherworldly Demons have a way to effectively communicate with their fellow brethren remotely, Zhang Xuan analyzed grimly.

If that was truly the case, their expedition to the ancient domain would be more dangerous than ever.

The Otherworldly Demons that were attempting to enter the ancient domain at the moment might have been able to liaise with those who had entered two years ago, along with the old principal. That would mean that the other party commanded greater intelligence regarding the ancient domain than their expedition team.

After taking a look, Zhang Xuan finally understood what was going on, and a bitter smile surfaced on his lips. If the Otherworldly Demons hadn't attacked the seal, the heat emanated by the door would have gradually accumulated, and eventually, it would have grown too powerful and induced an energy storm that would part the lava above it, creating a natural passageway straight into the ancient domain. It is likely that the old principal made use of this energy storm to enter the ancient domain.

In the end, the reason they weren't unable to find the ancient domain wasn't because they had found the wrong place but due to his formation flag releasing all of the energies accumulated within the seal! If he hadn't made a move a few days ago, the Otherworldly Demons might very well have stopped their attacks due to fears that they would die from the explosion.

When the seal eventually opened, they would have been able to enter the ancient domain with ease through the energy storm. They would have been spared a great deal of trouble.

What the heck was with that!

Forget it, I should return to set up the formation now.

Having made sense out of what was happening, there was no point in Zhang Xuan remaining there. Thus, he beckoned to his clone before diving back up to where the Golden Origin Cauldron was.

It had been roughly been four hours since he had entered the lava to cultivate, and the others were likely worried sick about him by now.

This time, his clone was extremely obedient, not causing any trouble at all. After returning his clone to the Myriad Anthive Nest, Zhang Xuan had the Golden Origin Cauldron surface.

Just as Zhang Xuan had guessed, the master teachers and combat masters outside were indeed very worried about him. His emergence from the lava left all of them heaving huge sighs of relief simultaneously.

Zhang Xuan scanned the crowd and said, "I am finally done scanning the geographical terrain below, so it is time to start setting up the formation. Everyone, prepare yourselves! Enter Ding Ding and await my command. Once we succeed, we will set forth immediately!"

Knowing how important the matter was, the crowd nodded grimly. "Alright!"

Hu!

With a loud bellow, the Golden Origin Cauldron expanded itself to tenfold its previous size, around twenty meters wide. The crowd hurriedly got within it.

Instead of entering the Golden Origin Cauldron like the others, Luo Ruoxin headed toward Zhang Xuan and said, "I won't be going in; I will accompany you outside."

"It will be safer for you to get into Ding Ding. I fear that you might meet with danger following behind me." Zhang Xuan frowned.

If something happened, at least the Golden Origin Cauldron could bear the brunt of the blow. If Luo Ruoxin remained outside, she would be potentially exposing herself to grave danger. Furthermore, if she couldn't keep up with the group and the lava caved in on her...

"Don't worry, I still have a couple of life preservation means up my sleeves," Luo Ruoxin said with a light smile.

"... Alright then." Seeing how confident Luo Ruoxin was and recalling how she could very well be an offspring of the Luo Clan, one of the Sage Clans, Zhang Xuan relented.

"Ding Ding, listen to my command. When I order you to set forth, you are to move immediately. There mustn't be the slightest bit of hesitation from you!" Zhang Xuan turned around to command the Golden Origin Cauldron before flying up to the area right above where the burst of energies was headed towards.

It had already been around eight minutes since the last burst of energies, so the next one was due soon.

Flicking his wrist, Zhang Xuan took out more than a hundred formation flags, and they floated right before him. Activating his Eye of Insight, he stared intently at the lava beneath him, waiting for the right moment to move.

Boom!

A moment later, the lava beneath began to flurry. A sharp glint flashed across Zhang Xuan's eyes as he flicked his wrist, and the formation flags swiftly flew down into their respective positions.

"Activate!" While standing in midair, Zhang Xuan stomped his feet, and powerful gusts of air spread into the surroundings like water ripples.

Weng!

A massive formation instantaneously came to life.

Hu!

The moment that the formation was activated, the lava beneath finally couldn't house the burst of energies anymore. As if a scissors tearing across a piece of silk, a massive rip appeared in the lava as the burst of energies headed right toward the massive formation.

Hong long long!

The instant that the burst of energies collided with the formation, it was absorbed and accumulated within the formation.

The Great Heaven Reversal Formation, when used in battle, had the effect of blocking the opponent's attack and returning it back at the latter. When utilized well, it could return the attack back at one's opponent without any loss of energy.

In other words, on top of being a defensive formation, the Great Heaven Reversal Formation had offensive means as well.

Of course, that was easier said than done, and the formation had its limits, too. For one, if the absorbed energy was beyond the durability of the formation, the person who set up the formation could very well suffer strong backlash and possibly die on the spot.

Seeing how the absorption of the power contained in the burst of energies hadn't resulted in the shattering of the Great Heaven Reversal Formation, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief as he wiped away the cold sweat on his forehead.

In truth, he had not been too sure if the formation would be able to withstand the immense might contained in the burst of energies either. It was fortunate that he had learned the 7-star Heaven's Path Formation Art earlier. Otherwise, even if it was Guild Leader Han setting up the Great Heaven Reversal Formation, the imperfections in setting it up could have resulted in the other

party's formation being unable to withstand the violent burst of energies.

Worried, the crowd in the Golden Origin Cauldron had been keeping an eye on the situation outside with their Spiritual Perception, and upon seeing this sight, Guild Leader Han couldn't help but narrow his eyes in shock. Principal Zhang sure has a deep understanding of formations!

His initial plan had been to have Zhang Xuan hide within the Golden Origin Cauldron while he set up the Great Heaven Reversal Formation. However, upon seeing this sight, he felt relieved that he had decided to go with Zhang Xuan's call instead. If he had obstinately chosen to take on the task himself, not only would the expedition team have failed to get into the ancient domain, he could very well have died from the backlash as well.

Even though the Great Heaven Reversal Formation was a grade-7 pinnacle formation, the other party had managed to set it up so perfectly that it harnessed prowess on par with a grade-8 formation. There was not the slightest flaw that he could see in it—not only was it perfectly harmonized with his surroundings, it was even further reinforced by the heat of the lava beneath, granting it unimaginable prowess.

Amidst his shock, the burst of energies finally calmed down, and the formation was done charging up as well. Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up as he flicked out a formation flag, and he tossed it forward powerfully.

Tzzzz la!

Just like how he dealt with the huge accumulation of energies within the seal a few days ago, the formation flag struck an opening of the Great Heaven Reversal Formation, and an inconceivably massive burst of might blasted forth along the formation flag.

BOOM!

Under the incredible might of the blast, a huge opening was ripped through the lava.

" Go! " Knowing that this was their chance to head through, Zhang Xuan bellowed loudly, and the Golden Origin Cauldron hurriedly dashed into the opening.

Zhang Xuan swiftly shot a glance at Luo Ruoxin before dashing into the opening as well.

Knowing that the passageway through the lava would only remain open for a brief moment before closing in on them, he executed the Heaven's Path Movement Art and darted forth at the fastest speed possible.

Over the past few months, he had been trying to merge the Heaven's Path Movement Art together with the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps, and just a few days ago, he had finally managed to do so perfectly. With the strengths of the two techniques merged together, Zhang Xuan was able to move as swift as a streak of lightning, allowing him to keep up even with the Saint 4-dan pinnacle Golden Origin Cauldron.

Luo shi... Fearing that Luo Ruoxin might have been unable to catch up, Zhang Xuan turned around to take a look, only to see her only around three to four meters behind him. No matter how fast he traveled, the distance between them didn't seem to lengthen at all.

As expected of an offspring of a Sage Clan, her speed sure is fearsome! Zhang Xuan nodded in awe.

Honestly speaking, even up to this point, he was still unable to discern how powerful the young lady behind him was. Nevertheless, considering how the other party was able to keep up with his Heaven's Path Movement Art—and judging from her leisurely look, it seemed like she wasn't anywhere close to exerting her full strength yet—there was no doubt that she was an expert.



Boom!

The Golden Origin Cauldron and Zhang Xuan passed through the hundred meters of lava in the blink of an eye. With a resounding crash, they landed in the ancient domain.

"Everyone, hurry out! There are Otherworldly Demons in the area, so be careful!" Zhang Xuan roared deafeningly as he quickly took his stance in front of Luo Ruoxin.

Based on what he had seen earlier, there were dozens of Otherworldly Demons in the area. While most of them were only at Saint 1-dan, there were quite a number of them around, so it was still imperative that they remained careful.

If the Otherworldly Demons were to attempt to launch an assault on them at this moment, their unprepared expedition team could potentially suffer quite a few casualties.

"Otherworldly Demons?"

The crowd hurriedly flew out of the Golden Origin Cauldron and swiftly put up a defensive formation, assessing their surroundings warily. However, with a look, they couldn't help but fall into a daze.

Wu shi looked at Zhang Xuan with a doubtful look on his face. "Principal Zhang, is this the ancient domain you spoke of? Shouldn't it be filled with buildings? Why is it... all rubble?"

"Rubble?" Zhang Xuan was surprised by the question.

He quickly took a look at his surroundings as well, and just as the other party had said, the exquisite buildings that he had seen just a moment ago had collapsed into rubble. Huge puffs of white smoke were rising from them, indicating that they had just fallen a moment ago.

"Could it be that... the Otherworldly Demons knew that we were coming, so they decisively chose to destroy the ancient domain in advance?" Zhang Xuan remarked.

"Cough cough..." Seeing Zhang Xuan's incensed look, Guild Leader Han said awkwardly, "They weren't the ones who destroyed it. Rather... it seems like the impact of the rebounded burst of energies was too great, to the extent that it not only tore the lava apart but jolted the ancient domain into the current state it is in as well."

The rebounded blast generated by the Great Heaven Reversal Formation was so great that it had ended up devastating the ancient domain as well.

"I was the one who did it?" Zhang Xuan's lips twitched in embarrassment. He had been praising his clone a moment ago for not causing any trouble this time around, but who would have thought that he would end up causing trouble instead?

What the heck was this?

"Right, where are the Otherworldly Demons? Did they flee?" Embarrassed, Zhang Xuan hurriedly changed the topic. Recalling those fellows that he had seen earlier, he quickly scanned his surroundings, but in that moment, a sheepish voice sounded in the air.

"Master, I think that... I might have accidentally... crushed them."

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# Chapter 1035: Cinque Sun Branch

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"Crushed them?"

Shocked, Zhang Xuan hurriedly looked beneath the Golden Origin Cauldron, and there, he saw a pile of flattened Otherworldly Demons.

Most of them were at Saint 1-dan, but there was a slightly larger figure who had reached Saint 4-dan. Nevertheless, unable to stand being crushed by the Golden Origin Cauldron, he was still reduced into meat paste. His entire body was plastered strongly to the ground, unable to torn off it.

Seeing that the Golden Origin Cauldron was still lying comfortably on a pile of carcasses, Zhang Xuan commanded impatiently, "Hurry up and move away!"

"Yes!" The Golden Origin Cauldron hurriedly leaped away.

Zhang Xuan began tabulating the number of carcasses in the area, and it tallied with the number of Otherworldly Demons he had seen earlier in his soul form.

Those fellows probably couldn't have imagined that the burst of energies would suddenly be rebounded on them, severely injuring them. After which, before they even attempted to escape, an enormous Golden Origin Cauldron fell upon them, crushing them to their deaths. In a sense, their deaths were quite tragic.

Well, at least they died quickly, so they didn't suffer too much.

Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella in distress. I was intending to capture one of them to find out how they managed to enter the ancient domain, and what that door over there is, but this... How am I to interrogate them now?

Not only did the rebounded blast from the formation destroy the entire ancient domain, the Golden Origin Cauldron had even crushed all of the Otherworldly Demons to death. Without any

intelligence to work with, how were they supposed to advance?

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan sent a telepathic message into the Myriad Anthive Nest. "Violeleaf King, do you recognize this fellow?"

The Violeleaf King swiftly swept the surroundings with his Spiritual Perception before responding. "Young Master, I am not too sure about those Saint 1-dan peons, but that Saint 4-dan Otherworldly Demon is one of the Upper Five Kings, the Fireleaf King!"

"Fireleaf King?" Zhang Xuan was stunned.

To think that the esteemed Fireleaf King of the Five Upper Kings would end up being crushed to death like cannon fodder, not even given the chance to speak a line at all. Wasn't this a little too pitiful for him?

"Indeed. The Fireleaf King has the ability to control heat and flames. In an environment such as this, he would have been able to display prowess far beyond that of a Saint 4-dan pinnacle expert. How did you manage to kill him?" the Violeleaf King asked in surprise.

The Upper Kings were not only strong, each of them also possessed their own unique secret art. For the young master to have killed one of them and yet be unaware of his identity... the Fireleaf King sure was pitiful.

Thinking about it, it seemed like the young master had already defeated six of the Ten Great Kings of the Qingtian Lineage so far. He really was the nemesis of the Qingtian Emperor.

"Ah, it was an accident..." Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly.

Since the other party was already dead, there was no point thinking too much into it. With a grasp, Zhang Xuan took the storage rings of the Otherworldly Demons and scanned through their contents carefully. However, there was no useful information

to be found. Thus, he turned to the crowd and said, "The buildings might have collapsed, but there might still be useful items lying around. Let's try combing the area and see if we can find anything."

While the place had been mostly reduced to rubble, there were still some parts of it that were intact and discernible. If the old principal and the others had been here before, they might be able to find clues on them.

"Un." The crowd nodded before scattering into the area.

Seeing that Luo Ruoxin was standing still on the spot, Zhang Xuan turned to her curiously and asked, "You aren't going to look around?"

"If there is anything of use, the Otherworldly Demons will have long found and taken it!" Luo Ruoxin shook her head and said, "Since all of the Otherworldly Demons were gathered here when they were killed, there is no doubt that there is something amiss with the door. We might not have even entered the real ancient domain at all."

"This..." Zhang Xuan was taken aback before nodding in awe.

As expected of an expert from a Sage Clan, her eye of discernment was indeed extraordinary!

If they were already in the ancient domain, the Otherworldly Demons wouldn't have been wasting their effort trying to destroy the seal on the door. Besides, even if there were some treasures of the ancient domain lying around the area, the Otherworldly Demons would have long swiped them clean and stored them in their storage rings.

They couldn't possibly have left them behind for others to take.

As expected, it didn't take long for the others to return empty-handed.

Wu shi walked up and said, "The ancient domain is constructed

within a cavern, and it is only roughly several hundred meters wide. We have searched around the area, but there is nothing at all. Should we try searching once more?"

After four hours of recuperation, he had already recovered to his peak condition. He could easily get a clear picture of the entire ancient domain by scanning it with his Spiritual Perception, and if there was anything to be found, he would have surely found it regardless of whether it was hidden beneath the rubble or not.

Waving his hand, Zhang Xuan said, "I see. There should be no need to search any further. If I am not mistaken, the secret should lie in this door over here!"

Hearing those words, the crowd turned their attention toward the door.

The door wasn't too large, roughly five meters tall and wide. It was covered by a seal, and from time to time, it would emanate a fearsome heat, making it difficult for anyone to approach it.

"Back when we charged through the lava, I noticed that the Otherworldly Demons had been attacking the seal, seemingly trying to open it," Zhang Xuan explained.

He couldn't say that he had seen it with his soul, so he could only justify it by saying that in such a way.

"Attacking the seal?" Wu shi repeated with a frown. Raising his palm, he stepped forward and struck the seal.

"Don't!" Noting Wu shi's action, Zhang Xuan suddenly felt his hair stand on end. He hurriedly yelled for the other party to stop, but it was already too late. Thus, he could only quickly bellow, "Everyone, get back!"

After saying those words, he anxiously retreated from the door.

Noticing the peculiar state that Zhang Xuan was in, the crowd quickly backed away as well. Not long later, the seal emanated a brilliant light, and a powerful burst of energies blasted upward,

tearing through the layer of lava above them.

However, not too long later, the powerful burst of energies abruptly returned, striking the area where they had been standing a moment before.

The flattened carcasses lying on the ground were knocked into the air forcefully like rubber balls, and under the ravaging might of the burst of energies, their bodies were torn to shreds, inducing a rain of flesh and blood in the area.

"This..." Upon seeing this sight, everyone couldn't help but wipe the cold sweat off their forehead. This was especially so for Wu shi.

Had Principal Zhang not reacted swiftly and instructed the others to back away, the weaker members of their expedition could very well have suffered grievous wounds from the earlier shockwave.

He had thought that it was just an ordinary seal, but who would have thought that it would induce such a powerful burst of energies?

More importantly... there was still the Great Heaven Reversal Formation that Principal Zhang had set up previously. Any energy that they released from below would be returned back to them at full might. Just the thought of it was sufficient to send shudders down their spines.

"Not only is the seal sturdy, we will even have a rebound from the burst of energies each time we attempt to attack it. How are we supposed to break the seal like that?"

The crowd warily returned back to the door before staring at one another hesitantly, unsure of what they should do.

There was nothing else in the area, and the only thing they had was the door. If the place they were currently in wasn't the ancient domain, it was very likely that the door was the entrance to the ancient domain! But... given that they weren't able to shake the seal in the slightest, how should they proceed?

If they were to strike it, it would generate a burst of energies that would eventually rebound back onto them. In a sense, the current situation they were in was even harder to resolve than the one before.

"Those Otherworldly Demons were here for some time, but they were still unable to find an alternative solution to the problem. It won't be easy for us to do so either."

"Considering the rate at which the seal dissipates with each strike, it will at least take several days of effort to break it open."

Just thinking how they would have to face a few days of rebounds from the burst of energies left the entire expedition team trembling in fear.

After a moment of discussion, the expedition team was still unable to find a solution to the problem. Thus, Guild Leader Han turned to Zhang Xuan and asked, "Principal Zhang, do you have an idea in mind?"

After everything that they had been through, everyone had deep respect and admiration for the young principal. Even Guild Leader Han had no choice but to admit that the other party was far more knowledgeable and wiser than him.

Zhang Xuan frowned. "Allow me to contemplate for a while."

Under normal circumstances, as long as he could approach the door and touch the seal, he could resolve the problem easily. However... the heat that was emanating from the door was simply too great, such that he couldn't hope to get close to it with his current strength!

The seal was currently inactive, and Wu shi's earlier strike hadn't activated it either, only jolting it. As such, he was unable to compile a book on it.

At the same time, his Eye of Insight wasn't strong enough to see through the door either.



Let me see if I can get close to the door. Clenching his jaws, Zhang Xuan tried to walk over.

As long as he could do it, he would surely be able to find the flaws of the seal through the Library of Heaven's Path and resolve it.

Driving his Heaven's Path zhenqi as he proceeded forward, Zhang Xuan still felt searing heat assaulting him relentlessly, causing sweat to rain down his forehead.

Hu!

Eventually, he came to a halt. Lifting his gaze, he found that he was still twenty meters away from reaching the door. There was no way he could touch it from that distance.

Even though he had refined his soul earlier, it had done nothing to enhance his zhenqi and the resilience of his physical body, so his body's ability to fend off heat was still the same as ever.

My physical body is still a little too weak. If only I could cultivate it now and strengthen it. Zhang Xuan sighed.

It was indeed possible for his soul to touch the door, but putting aside the fact that he could not do so in front of so many people, he wouldn't be able to compile a book through the touch of his soul either.

His zhenqi cultivation was already at Nascent Saint pinnacle, and he needed the Seven-colored Earth Jade Essence to achieve a breakthrough. Thus, the only way out was to find a way to enhance his physical body so that he could quickly touch the door and compile a book on the seal.

With such thought in mind, Zhang Xuan returned to the crowd and asked, "Does anyone here have a Cinque Sun Branch?"

"Cinque Sun Branch? Are you referring to a branch of the Cinque Sun Tree that only survives in extremely arid climates?" Wu shi frowned.

The Cinque Sun Tree was an exceedingly rare plant that only lived in areas rich in earth flames. It needed to be exposed to sunlight for long hours each day, and if it came into contact with the slightest bit of rainwater, it would immediately combust and turn to ash.

Due to this bizarre property, Cinque Sun Branches were even rarer than Saint artifacts.

"Indeed." Zhang Xuan nodded.

A Cinque Sun Branch was the final artifact required to cultivating the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body. As long as he could find one and absorb the aura of the sun sealed within it, he would be able to finally achieve Consummation 1 in this physical body cultivation technique!

It might only have been a single stage of difference between the Fourth Incandescence and the Fifth Incandescence, but it signified the difference between Major Accomplishment and Consummation. Upon reaching this stage, the five incandescences would finally form a complete system within the body, creating a cyclical relationship, thus enhancing the prowess that one's physical body could exert manyfold.

Upon reaching this level, one would be able to crush Saint 2-dan experts such as the Byzantium Helios Beast with just the sheer prowess of one's physical body.

"The Cinque Sun Branch is an extremely rare medicinal herb, but I have to say that you are really lucky. Just a few days ago, when I was looking through the market of Firesource City, I happened to find one and bought it. This should be it, right?" With a chuckle, Guild Leader Han flicked his wrist and passed over a wooden branch that was almost as thick as an arm.

The area around Firesource City happened to have the climate suited for Cinque Sun Trees to grow, so it would pop up in the market from time to time. Guild Leader Han happened to spot one

while loitering around the market, and thinking that he could resell it elsewhere and earn a huge profit, he had decided to buy it.

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# Chapter 1036: Quintuple Incandescence

## Golden Body, Fifth Incandescence

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"Indeed, that's it!" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in excitement.

The wooden branch in the other party's hand wasn't too large, but reminiscent of charcoal, it emanated intense heat.

There was no doubt about it; it was a Cinque Sun Branch!

He had casually asked for it, but who knew that Guild Leader Han would really have one in his possession, and such a large one at that? It was definitely enough for him to cultivate the Fifth Incandescence!

"How much does it cost? I will buy it from you!" Zhang Xuan asked as he took it.

When he took the formation flags from the others earlier to help everyone pass through the lava, it could be considered to have been a public matter with everyone's interests at stake, so it was fine for him to not pay for it.

This time around, however, he was intending to use the Cinque Sun Branch to cultivate the Fifth Incandescence of the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body and raise the prowess of his physical body. This was a private matter, and thus, it was only right for him to pay for it.

"This... We are venturing into the dangerous ancient domain together, and it is only right for us to help one another. How can I charge you for this?" Guild Leader Han shook his head.

As valuable as the Cinque Sun Branch was, it was only a material possession. Other than to sell it for a couple of spirit stones, it was of no use to him.

If the other party could use it to break the seal on the door and bring them into the real ancient domain, he could consider the

item to have been put to good use.

"Those are two different matters and should be kept separate. If you don't accept my payment, I won't be able to accept the Cinque Sun Branch at ease." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"This..." Knowing that master teachers were obstinate about their own values, Guild Leader Han knew that it would be improper for him to insist on the matter. Thus, he could only shake his head with a bitter smile and say, "I bought the branch at two hundred high-tier spirit stones, so I will sell it to you at the same price as well."

"Alright." Zhang Xuan nodded and passed two hundred high-tier spirit stones over.

With the profits from the sales of the Cloudmist Flowers and the fortune he had procured from emptying out the storage rings of the Otherworldly Demon Kings that he had subdued thus far, he had more than ten thousand high-tier spirit stones with him at the moment. This bit of money was nothing to him.

Guild Leader Han accepted the spirit stones with a helpless expression on his face, but his admiration for the young man couldn't help but deepen.

Putting aside Zhang Xuan's incredible knowledge on formations despite his young age, his self-discipline was truly admirable. He had a clear idea of what should be done and what should not be done, and he didn't allow greed to blind him.

A principled person like him was a true blessing to mankind, and there was no doubt that he would eventually go on to achieve great things in the world.

The other master teachers nodded in approval at that sight.

The young man before them was truly the embodiment of the word 'upright'.

It was no wonder he had become the principal of the Hongyuan

Master Teacher Academy at such a young age whereas they had still been humble nobodies at his age. Just the thought of it left them reddening in embarrassment.

This was especially so for Liu Mo 1 . If only there was a hole in the ground, he would have dived in without the slightest hesitation.

Back when he first met the young man, he had thought that the other party was too arrogant, and he had even berated the other party for it. Yet, not only did the other party manage to resolve the problem with the seal, the other party was even the one who led them through the lava.

His capability was truly something that Liu Mo could never hope to match up with.

If the other party was the brilliant moon in the sky, Liu Mo was the humble dirt on the ground; that was the vast, unbridgeable distance between them.

"I am going to cultivate using the Cinque Sun Branch now, so please do make use of this time to rest and recuperate. The seal could very well be the path to the ancient domain, and it is unknown what kind of peril we will face there. To heighten our chances of survival, we should ensure that we are in our peak state so that we are ready to face any dangers that come our way," Zhang Xuan said.

The crowd nodded.

After which, Zhang Xuan headed to a quiet corner of the rubble and sat down. Holding the freshly obtained Cinque Sun Branch in his hands, he drove his zhenqi and began cultivating.

Boom!

The energy within the branch flowed through his meridians and nourished every single cell, inducing a qualitative evolution in his body.

The Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body served to strengthen

the vitals of one's body and, through doing so, enhance the strength that one was able to exert.

Having patched up the flaws of the Quintuple Incandescence Body, it had become a Heaven's Path cultivation technique. Naturally, he was able to cultivate the Fifth Incandescence swiftly without any problems.

The immense energy flowing through his meridians stimulated his entire body, such that even his blood began to metamorphose as well.

Two hours later...

A resounding echo sounded from his body as the five incandescence in his heart, lungs, spleen, liver, and kidneys came together to form a smooth cyclical flow. A brilliant light shone from Zhang Xuan's body, and in that instant, it felt as if his body had become indestructible.

At the same time, Zhang Xuan's physical appearance changed slightly as well. His height grew slightly taller, his shoulders became slightly broader, and his waist grew slightly slimmer, forming a perfect streamline figure.

Feeling the power flowing through his body, Zhang Xuan opened his eyes and clenched his fists tightly together. Wonderful!

With the sheer might of his physical body in itself, the current him could kill Saint 2-dan experts easily. In terms of resilience, his body was already comparable to a Saint artifact!

A Saint low-tier artifact to be exact, but nevertheless, it was still extremely fearsome.

Should someone attempt to hack the Glacier Rain Sword down on him right now, there was no doubt that it was the Glacier Rain Sword that would shatter.

In fact, even if he were to go head-to-head with the Golden Origin Cauldron, he wouldn't lose by much.

It could be said that the current him was no different from a human-shaped weapon. Even without a weapon in hand, he was still capable of causing devastating damage.

Hu!

Exhaling deeply, Zhang Xuan swiftly concealed the changes in his body and stood up.

It was inconceivable for one's body to grow so much stronger with just a short moment of cultivation. There was no such thing as being too careful. In order to avoid any unnecessary trouble, it was still best for him to maintain a low profile.

Lowering his gaze to take a look, he noted that the energy contained within the Cinque Sun Branch was nearly completely depleted.

Stowing it in his storage ring, he stood up and returned to the door.

Before he could even reach the door, he saw the crowd sitting in a straight line before the door, creating a rather bizarre sight.

Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, the combat master at the very back stood up and greeted him. "Principal Zhang, you have returned."

"What are you doing?" Zhang Xuan asked doubtfully.

If you want to cultivate, so be it. But to be sitting in such a neat line as if you are queuing up at the cafeteria for food... What the heck?

"Ah, it's like this. Earlier, Wu shi realized that it is possible to use the heat released by the door to refine one's zhenqi and make it even purer. Thus, we began cultivating using it. However, due to our differing tolerance to heat, we can only select positions that are suited to us," the combat master explained.

"Differing tolerance to heat?" Zhang Xuan nodded contemplatively.



The fact that the sheer heat emanated from the door could melt the rocks within a hundred meters into lava clearly showed how fearsome it was. The extreme conditions produced by the door were indeed very suitable to refine one's zhenqi.

However, just as the other party said, everyone had a differing tolerance to heat. It was just like how his soul could only advance fifty meters at the start, but after cultivating for a bit, he was able to advance further and eventually reach the hundred-meter mark.

"Indeed. The few of us can only cultivate at a distance of forty meters away from the door, or else our cultivation could very well go berserk. Speaking of which, Wu shi and the others sure are fearsome. They are actually able to stand the heat at fifteen meters away," said the combat master as he shot a glance at the few figures in front with admiration gleaming in his eyes.

Zhang Xuan nodded. "To be able to withstand the heat at fifteen meters away, it seems like their physical bodies, souls, and zhenqi are pretty strong."

Zhang Xuan had only been able to reach twenty meters away from the door himself when he tried earlier. The fact that Wu shi and the others were able to reach fifteen meters away was indeed incredible.

The combat master suddenly recalled a matter and asked, "Right, Principal Zhang, didn't you leave to cultivate? Are you already done?"

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded. "Alright, I'll leave you to cultivate here."

After saying those words, Zhang Xuan began walking forward. In the blink of an eye, he was twenty meters away from the door.

At this moment, only Wu shi, Guild Leader Han, Feng Xun, and a couple of others were in front of him. Even Wo Tianqiong and the other principals were behind him at the moment.

"Principal Zhang... walked over there just like that? Wasn't he unable to hold on earlier?"

Seeing how the young principal casually proceeded toward the twenty meters mark as he nodded at the other master teachers and combat masters while passing by them, gesturing for them to remain seated and continue with their cultivation, the lower jaws of the combat master nearly fell to the ground.

At the same time, Feng Xun, who was seated at the nineteen-meter mark, saw Zhang Xuan walk past him with a smile on his face, and his eyes nearly popped out of his head.

He was a Saint 3-dan pinnacle cultivator, a Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall, and coming to the nineteen-meter mark had nearly cost him his life. He had needed to sit down immediately to cultivate so that he could neutralize the fire poison in his body. Yet, that fellow was walking past him casually with a bright smile on his face, as if he was just wandering the streets, not pressured by the heat in the least. Did he have to be so exaggerated?

Wondering how far the other party would be able to proceed, Feng Xun's gaze followed Zhang Xuan, and before long, he saw the latter walk up to Wu shi and begin chatting with him.

"Wu shi, there is no need to get up. I am just heading over there to take a look, so do continue with your cultivation. There's no need to stand on ceremony."

Following which, the other party continued proceeding forward with a smile on his lips. Fourteen meters, thirteen meters, twelve meters... In the blink of an eye, he was already within ten meters of the door.

The searing heat induced a sizzling sound from his clothes, which were seemingly ready to break apart at any moment. Yet, Zhang Xuan continued walking forward with the same bright smile from before, as if he was completely impervious to the heat.

"This..."

This time, Feng Xun wasn't the only one who was shocked silly. Even Wu shi and Guild Leader Han ended up trading shocked glances with one another, and their mouths began twitching from the sheer ridiculousness of the sight before them.

Fifteen meters already left them feeling as if their bodies were going to rip apart, and that fellow had actually managed to walk within ten meters. On top of that, his face even had a smile plastered on, as if it was nothing at all. That monster...

Eight meters, seven meters, six meters...

As the other party slowly proceeded closer to the door, his eyebrows inadvertently shot up, seemingly starting to feel the pressure.

Hong long!

Zhenqi abruptly burst forth from the acupoints of the other party, wrapping his body.

Upon seeing this sight, Wu shi gulped. "He is only using his zhenqi when he is five meters away from the door? Just how powerful is his physical body?"

When Zhang Xuan walked leisurely past him, seemingly unfazed by the heat, he had thought that the other party was just putting on an act. However, seeing that the other party was only driving his zhenqi when he was five meters away from the door, he realized that he had been sorely mistaken.

The other party was truly unfazed by the heat!

But still, to only have to drive his zhenqi when he was within a five meters radius of the door... wasn't his physical body a little too strong?

Could the other party have gone away to cultivate his physical body?

But... it was common knowledge that the physical body was the most difficult of all to cultivate! How did he manage to make such a huge breakthrough in his physical body cultivation within just two hours?

Amidst his shock, he saw Principal Zhang walk all the way up to the door, raise his hand, and place it on the door. After that, he abruptly retreated eight steps before coming to a halt.

He closed his eyes, seemingly musing over something.

A moment later, he opened his eyes once more, and with a deep frown, he stared at the door ahead of him with a peculiar expression on his face.

"This... how is it possible?"

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# Chapter 1037: The Frenzied Luo Ruoxin!

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Noting the peculiar expression on Zhang Xuan's face, Wu Shi couldn't help but ask, "Principal Zhang, is there something wrong with the seal?"

In his view, Principal Zhang was a person who would retain his composure even if the world was about to collapse on them. Yet, for him to show such an expression at this moment... something huge must have happened!

"Oh, it's nothing much. I just find it a little weird..." Zhang Xuan's words petered out into silence, seemingly not intending to say anything more about it. He walked to a distance of forty meters away and beckoned everyone over. "Everyone, halt your cultivation for just a moment. Let's discuss how we should break the seal and enter the door."

Hearing those words, the crowd hurriedly rushed over with eyes lit up in excitement. "Principal Zhang, have you found a way to overcome the seal?"

"I did manage to find a way, but..."

Scratching his head, Zhang Xuan had no idea where he should start from. What he had just seen was simply too inconceivable for anyone to believe to be true. Thus, he decided to just get straight to the point. "Do any of you have the Spirit Solution of Vigor with you?"

"Spirit Solution of Vigor?"

Everyone glanced at one another in astonishment, not knowing why Zhang Xuan was asking such a thing.

Spirit Solution of Vigor was the academic name for the urine of saint beasts so that it didn't sound as crass. Usually, cultivators would take some when they travelled so that they could demarcate a zone to prevent spirit beasts from harassing them at night.

Back when Zhang Xuan challenged You Xu to a Physician Life-and-Death Duel, he had forced You Xu to drink it, leaving him feeling so indignant that he nearly spurted blood.

"Considering how old the ancient domain will be, I assumed that there wouldn't be any saint beasts and spirit beasts, so I didn't bring any along with me."

"Same as well. I usually bring some with me, but as I grew stronger, I found that the occasions I needed any were growing fewer and fewer. Furthermore, it feels a little crass to have such an item in my storage ring, so I threw it away!"

"We of the Combat Master Hall never use such a thing. If spirit beasts dare to engage us, we just slaughter them. As long as enough blood is shed, the others know better than to provoke us."

...

The crowd shook their heads.

Those who had participated in the expedition were all respectable individuals; Han Xu was the head of the Qingyuan Empire Formation Master Guild; Wu Rufeng and Mu Yuan were 7-star master teachers; Wo Tianqiong, Shen Pingchao, and Wu Ran were the principals of Master Teacher Academies.

Given so, they would never keep something as crass as the urine of saint beasts in their storage rings.

As for the Combat Master Hall, they didn't have the habit of bringing the Spirit Solution of Vigor with them. Thus, it turned out that there was no one in the expedition team who had it!

"None of you have any?" Zhang Xuan pinched his glabella before turning to Luo Ruoxin.

Noting Zhang Xuan's gaze on her, the young lady snorted, "I don't have any either!"

"I see. Since no one has any with them..." Zhang Xuan shook his

head regrettably before taking out a pile of pots, bowls, gourds, and woks and saying helplessly, "We will just have to do it ourselves."

Pu!

Everyone staggered weakly and nearly spurted a mouthful of blood.

From searching for the Spirit Solution of Vigor to having us produce it ourselves... What the heck is with this twist?

Furthermore, we are all respectable figures! To urinate like that...

Everyone felt like their mind was going to blow from the sheer insanity of the situation they were facing.

Ignoring the conflicted faces around him, Zhang Xuan waved his hand and said, "Hurry up. Also, we will need as much as possible. Whether we can break the seal or not will depend on how much you are able to produce!"

"I..."

In that moment, everyone felt like crying.

"Alright. Gauge your own personal circumstances and grab a tool that is the most suited for you," Zhang Xuan said as he gestured at the pots, bowls, gourds, and woks beside him.

He had obtained all of those from the storage rings of the Otherworldly Demons. Those were probably the tools that they used to cook, and they were exceptionally clean, making them ideal containers to store their urine.

"Alright then..."

Seeing the earnest look on Zhang Xuan's face, the crowd could tell that he wasn't just trying to make fun of them. Thus, after exchanging glances, they eventually nodded before grabbing an item each with gritted teeth.

Hu hu hu!

In the blink of an eye, they disappeared from sight.

There was no way they were going to urinate in front of so many people; it was too embarrassing!

Soon, only Zhang Xuan and Luo Ruoxin were left in the square.

Seeing that the young lady hadn't taken anything yet, Zhang Xuan hesitated for a moment before picking up a cup from the ground. "Cough cough. This is for you."

"You..."

Luo Ruoxin's teeth were gritted so tightly together that it seemed as if they were going to chip from the immense pressure between them. She glared coldly at the fellow before her, tempted to kill him with a single slap.

"What's wrong?" Noticing Luo Ruoxin's look of displeasure, Zhang Xuan panicked. "Is it too small? Then... what about this?"

After saying those words, Zhang Xuan hurriedly passed a huge pot over.

"Scram!" Luo Ruoxin bellowed furiously, nearly driven insane by Zhang Xuan's actions.

She had always been considered a goddess regardless of where she went, an existence whom others looked up to. Yet, this fellow actually passed her a cup... And, as if that wasn't bad enough, he even tried to pass her a pot afterwards!

Are you trying to say that I will be able to fill that huge pot up?

Shall I show you what hell looks like?

Not expecting the other party to snub his goodwill and even bellow at him to scram, Zhang Xuan pouted in indignation. "If you are unwilling to do it, so be it. There is no need to get angry over it..."



"You..." Luo Ruoxin felt the final string of rationality in her mind threatening to snap.

In her entire life, she had never gotten emotional over anything, as if a spectator of the world or a still painting. However, ever since she met this fellow, she had found all kinds of emotions coming to her. It was as if someone had vanquished the silence from her life.

"Alright, alright. I'll leave." Seeing how Luo Ruoxin would erupt if he said a word more, Zhang Xuan hurriedly turned around and fled.

However, even after Zhang Xuan's departure, Luo Ruoxin still felt the flames of anger burning intensely within her, unable to be quelled without a good beating of him. While she was considering whether or not she should catch up to fellow back and give him a piece of her mind, she suddenly heard a distressed voice from not too far away.

"I don't have anything to pee out of! What do I do? Can anyone help me?"

Luo Ruoxin turned her gaze over and saw the Golden Origin Cauldron looking around anxiously, seemingly looking for help.

"Don't leave! Won't any of you aid me? Or, Master, can you smith one for me?"

"..."

Dark lines streaked across Luo Ruoxin's face.

Just what kind of people had she gotten involved with?

...

Oblivious to the reason behind the young lady's rage, Zhang Xuan found himself an isolated area as well. However, at this moment, a thought flashed across his mind, and he slapped his forehead in realization.

How could I have been so silly?

The next moment, he disappeared from the spot and entered the Myriad Anthive Nest.

Floating in midair, Zhang Xuan loudly bellowed, "All of you, come over!"

Hu hu hu!

In the blink of an eye, all of the saint beasts within the Myriad Anthive Nest flew over.

Knowing that the ancient domain would be dangerous, he had made sure to bring a few more saint beasts with him when he returned to the Master Teacher Academy. Taking into account the Byzantium Helios Beast and the nine kings of the Cloudmist Ridge as well, he had more than several dozen saint beasts in the Myriad Anthive Nest in total.

"I need all of you to urinate for me!" Saying those words, Zhang Xuan passed a pile of pots toward the beasts as well.

"Roar?"

"Roar!"

The beasts were bewildered by the abrupt command, but considering that the other party was their master, they dared not act against his command. Thus, they took a large pot each and turned around.

In an instant, an overwhelming stench filled the Myriad Anthive Nest.

A few moments later, the beasts returned with huge pots in their hands, each weighing ten jin 1 at the very minimum.

Quite a number of these saint beasts had massive physiques, boasting both heights and lengths of several meters. Naturally, the amount of urine they released was also proportionate to their size.

"Not bad!"

Seeing how the bunch of fellows didn't disappoint, Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction. With a swift movement, he poured all of the Spirit Solution of Vigor together into a massive pail. All in all, it weighed more than two thousand jin!

"Alright, you all can get back to whatever you were doing previously!" Zhang Xuan dismissed the saint beasts with a wave of his hand before leaving the Myriad Anthive Nest.

Returning back to the door, he noted that there were quite a few people who had returned. Most of them were from the Combat Master Hall.

"Here is what you needed!" Feng Xun harrumphed as he passed a pot over.

The others also hurriedly did the same as well, but the quantity wasn't a lot. The ten or so members of the Combat Master Hall had only produced around half a pot in total.

"So little?" Zhang Xuan glanced at the pot before turning his gaze back to the powerful-looking members of the Combat Master Hall with a deep frown.

So many lively young men, and yet, this was all they could produce?

Recalling how badly he had been pummeled, Feng Xun suddenly felt a surge of rage and lashed out. "Little? What about yours? Why don't you bring yours out to show us then?"

"I..." Zhang Xuan was just about to speak when Wu shi, Mu shi, Wo Tianqiong, and the other master teachers flew over. Their faces were all reddened in embarrassment.

Putting theirs together, they realized that their amount didn't even come close to the combat masters'.

"This..." Zhang Xuan couldn't help but feel a surge of helplessness.

It was fortunate that he was sharp enough to think of a backup plan, or else, with that pitiful amount that all of them had produced, it wouldn't even be enough to water a plant, let alone break a formation.

"Forget it, the amount you all have is too little. Let's use mine instead!" Seeing how the amount from everyone combined did not even add up to a single pot, Zhang Xuan shook his head and tossed it aside casually.

Feeling humiliated by Zhang Xuan's words, Feng Xun lashed out furiously. "Use yours? Can yours be more than all of us combined?"

"This is mine."

Boom!

A massive wooden pail weighing over two thousand jin 2 fell onto the ground, raising a cloud of dust in the air.

Pu!

"How is that possible?" Seeing the massive pail, the eyes of the combat masters and master teachers couldn't help but fly around the place, frenzied by what they were seeing.

Even if your bladder is big, surely there should be a limit to it. With so much water, it could easily drown you several times over. How in the world did you manage to find so much water within you?

The one who took the heaviest blow from this matter was naturally Feng Xun. He felt blood gushing up his throat once more.

Just how in the world did you manage to pull this off?

It is one thing for you to be strong, but to be able to urinate so much... is there a folded space in your bladder?

If we had known that you were able to produce so much, we wouldn't have bothered going through all the trouble!

"Alright, I'm going to break the seal now."

Ignoring the looks on the faces around him, Zhang Xuan raised the pail with his hand, and with a step, he flew into the sky, heading for the seal.

On the other hand, hearing that Zhang Xuan was about to break the seal, the others quickly snapped out of their frenzied states and hurriedly turned their gazes toward the door.

They had studied the seal carefully earlier, but they had not been able to find any other method to break it. Even the Otherworldly Demons that had come before them had been left with no choice but to resort to brute force, attacking it relentlessly. Yet, Principal Zhang was actually able to find a solution just by touching it, instructing them to gather their urine right afterward.

Everyone was curious to see just what the method of breaking the seal was for it to require urine.

Hu!

Before everyone's gazes, Zhang Xuan arrived directly above the door, and with a grim look, he tapped on the bottom of the pail.

Boom!

A huge hole immediately appeared in the pail, and the content stored within fell toward the seal.

Tzzzzzzzz!

As if sulfur meeting metal, upon contact with the seal, a sound of corrosion immediately sounded from the seal. In an instant, the incomparably sturdy seal dissipated into nothingness.

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# Chapter 1038: How Big!

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"This..." Taking the scene into sight, Guild Leader Han suddenly thought of something, and his eyes narrowed. With a quivering voice, he said, "I've got it..."

"Got it?"

"What's going on?"

Seeing that Guild Leader Han had managed to make sense out of what had just happening, the confused crowd immediately turned their gazes to him.

Even the full might attack from the Saint 4-dan Wu shi had barely fazed that seal, so why would pouring a little of... that kind of stuff dissipate it?

"If I am not mistaken, the seal is probably of pure yang attribute, which makes it extremely vulnerable to contamination and water. If it was only plain water, the seal wouldn't have fallen apart that easily. But if one were to use the Spirit Solution of Vigor, it would curb the pure yang attribute of the seal, resulting in its swift dissipation," Guild Leader Han explained.

"Do formations of pure yang attribute have such properties? Why haven't I heard of it before?" Wu shi frowned.

He had met quite a few pure yang formations before, but he had never heard that they could be destroyed so easily with urine. If that was truly the case, wouldn't the existence of such formations be completely meaningless?

"Ordinary pure yang formations don't have such a property, but... if it is a perfected pure yang formation, that would be a different matter. Actually, most formations are vulnerable to contamination. For example, there are reports of a group that was trapped in a Confinement Formation for an extended period of time, unable to break out. However, when one of the ladies in the

group gave birth 1 , the spiritual energy powering the formation abruptly dispersed, resulting in the collapse of the formation!" Guild Leader Han said.

"That..." Mu shi nodded in agreement. "I think I have heard of such a matter as well."

It was due to this that there were those who used the blood released by a pregnant woman during childbirth to forge artifacts to destabilize and destroy formations.

After explaining the matter, Guild Leader Han couldn't help but glance at the young man not too far away and remark meaningfully, "But to be able to tell the flaws of the seal with just a single look, Principal Zhang's comprehension of formations has reached an astounding level."

In truth, breaking a perfected pure yang formation wasn't as easy as just pouring the Spirit Solution of Vigor on it. If one failed to find the crux of the formation and weaken it with the Spirit Solution of Vigor right from the start, not only would one be unable to break the formation, the formation might even retaliate.

Taking the seal for example, judging from how it would release a burst of energies whenever it came under attack, it seemed like it had been built with the ability to retaliate against any attacks. Haphazard movements against it could potentially put one in danger.

While Principal Zhang's actions seemed simple, simply pouring the pail of Spirit Solution of Vigor over the seal, in truth, the height at which the pail was at, the force that its contents fell on the seal with, and the area where its contents would land... all of these had to be precisely calculated, not the slightest margin of error would be tolerated.

It was extremely challenging on one's control.

Most probably, only that monster was able to think of such a

method to overcome the formation and even succeed on his first try.

One of the combat masters couldn't help but ask, "But such a bizarre method of overcoming the seal... how did the old principal and the others manage to enter back then? Were they really able to think of the same solution as well?"

The others were also puzzled by this bewildering fact.

It was apparent that such a bizarre method could only be thought of and pulled off by the seemingly omnipotent Principal Zhang. Considering the straightforward and austere personality of the old principal, Zhang Yinqiu, there was no way he would ever have thought of or even tried such a method.

After contemplating for a brief moment, Guild Leader Han said, "I am not sure how they got in, but... it is likely that they might have possessed some information that we are unaware of, or perhaps they were in possession of a key that allowed them to bypass the seal!"

Most ancient domains were built with the welfare of the later generations in mind. As such, they often came with a key or a unique artifact that granted those in possession of it to bypass the various traps and formations laid all across the ancient domain.

"That might very well be the case." The crowd nodded in agreement.

Indeed. Had it been not for Principal Zhang's help, they could very well have been still stuck at the trial above, completely helpless as to how they should proceed. It was hard to imagine that the old principal and his team could fare better than them without a key in hand.

Geji! Geji!

While they were talking, the wooden pail had finally been emptied, and the seal began to shatter. A moment later, the



massive door opened up before everyone's eyes.

"We can enter now!" Seeing that the door had finally been opened, Zhang Xuan tossed his wooden pail to the side and heaved a sigh of relief.

Through the flaws listed in the Library of Heaven's Path, Zhang Xuan had learned that the formation was a perfected pure yang formation, which made the Spirit Solution of Vigor a perfect counter it. It was with this knowledge in mind that he had formulated such a daring plan, but who would have thought that it would actually work?

"Alright!" The crowd nodded before quickly moving toward the door.

Wu shi was still the first to lead the way, and only after confirming that there was no danger inside did he beckon the others over as well.

The area outside the door was incomparably hot, but upon stepping into the passageway within the door, the heat seemed to have disappeared all of a sudden. On the contrary, there was even a cooling breeze on the other side of the passageway, as if everything they had experienced just a moment ago was an illusion.

Bewildered by the abrupt changes in his surroundings, one of the combat masters asked, "Was it just my imagination?"

Given how the heat had been emanated from the door, they had thought that the other side of the door would have been so incomparably hot that it would be unbearable. Yet, it was completely different from what they had expected. Not only was it not hot, it was even... cooling?

Was everything that they had just undergone a moment ago nothing more than a figment of their imagination?

That would truly have been eerie!

"Don't panic. Our previous experiences with the intense heat and

the lava were real, and what we are feeling at this very moment isn't an illusion either!" Guild Leader Han said in assurance. "It is very likely that there is a formation set up around here that allows one to alter the temperature of the surroundings freely. It is similar to the ones used in Formation Master Guilds, albeit a more extreme version."

Most Formation Master Guilds had a formation that controlled the conditions within it, such as the temperature, so as to create a comfortable environment for the formation masters to work in.

One reason there would be such a steep difference in the environment could be due to a similar formation being set up within the door.

"That's indeed possible..." Hearing the explanation, the crowd nodded in agreement.

Even though it was inconceivable to them that one could induce such a steep change in the surrounding temperature through just a formation, they also knew that the person who had left behind the ancient domain had been an expert far beyond their caliber, so it was unwise to gauge the other party by their standards.

After all, their experiences were limited by their cultivation, so what might have seemed unbelievable to them might not necessary be impossible. Principal Zhang overcoming the seal with the Spirit Solution of Vigor was one example of that.

"It isn't a formation."

At this moment, a voice suddenly sounded. The one who had spoken was neither Wu shi nor Zhang Xuan, but the reticent Luo Ruoxin.

"What else can it be if not a formation?" Noting Luo Ruoxin's confident tone, the crowd couldn't help but feel a little bewildered.

"It's a type of spatial manipulation!" Luo Ruoxin replied.

"Spatial manipulation?" The crowd glanced at one another,

unable to comprehend what had just been said.

"It is similar to the concepts used in storage rings. Stepping across the door has already brought us to another dimension, and it goes without saying that the environment will be completely different from before. The only reason you didn't notice it is due to the seal cast over the door," Luo Ruoxin said.

"We are in another dimension?" The bodies of the crowd jolted in astonishment upon hearing those words.

A formation was still a concept that was relatable to the crowd, but the laws of space were beyond their comprehension.

For the elder who had left behind the ancient domain to be able to manipulate even space itself, just how powerful an expert was he?

"It is said that Saint 9-dan experts are capable of comprehending the laws of space, allowing them to set up folded spaces that are capable of sustaining life. Could it be that the master of the ancient domain has reached such a level as well?" Wu shi muttered with fists clenched in agitation.

As a 7-star high-tier master teacher, he was privy to some information regarding the top echelons of the Master Teacher Continent. As rare as Saint 9-dan experts were, there were still some books regarding them in the Master Teacher Pavilion that others could learn from.

Experts of that caliber were already far beyond their reach, existences that they could barely fathom. Even a mechanism or formation that they set up on a whim could easily blow their minds.

Hearing those words, Luo Ruoxin shook her head with her eyes lowered slightly. It was hard to tell whether that gesture was directed toward Wu shi's response or a contemplative gesture on her part.

Only Saint 9-dan experts are capable of comprehending the laws of space? Zhang Xuan blinked in astonishment.

In truth, he hadn't thought that spatial manipulation would be such an advanced ability.

He had once entered a folded space back at the Saint Ascension Platform, and he had even ordered the Myriad Anthive Queen to assimilate it into her nest. If that was the case, did it mean that the place had been left behind by a Saint 9-dan expert as well?

Back then, Kong shi had only achieved a breakthrough to Saint realm, so it was impossible for him to have set it up himself. That would mean that there was already a loyal Saint 9-dan subordinate following him even back then.

However, considering the incredible prowess and the unique charisma that Kong shi commanded, it would not have been too difficult for him to take in a couple of followers who boasted strength greater than him.

Back then, when I first met Luo Ruoxin in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy during the public lecture event, she was able to maneuver through the bustling crowd without anyone coming close to touching her at all. That seems to have been spatial manipulation as well.

Such an idea emerged in Zhang Xuan's mind, but he soon shook his head with a bitter smile. No, that should be impossible. She's only a 6-star master teacher, so even if she is stronger than me, she can't possibly be too far ahead. It is probably some kind of secret art or unique artifact.

Having read all of the books in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, Zhang Xuan had learned that the Master Teacher Continent was filled with all kinds of wonders. On top of unique constitutions that could emerge randomly among fortunate individuals from time to time, there were also formidable clans who possessed special bloodlines. Through the power of their

bloodline, they could draw forth exceptional strength that had the potential to exceed any battle techniques in the world.

This was also the reason the Sage Clans wielded immense power in the Master Teacher Continent, with only few daring to oppose them.

Perplexed, Zhang Xuan turned to Luo Ruoxin and asked, "How can you be certain that it isn't a formation but a type of spatial manipulation?"

Hearing those words, Wo Tianqiong and the others turned their gazes over as well.

Concepts relating to space were extremely profound, far beyond what they could comprehend at their current level.

Luo Ruoxin pointed a finger forward and said, "That's simple. Just look ahead and you will know."

The crowd hurriedly turned their eyes over, and at the other end of the passageway they were currently in, the scenery abruptly changed.

Meandering mountains that stretched into the horizon were filled with lush greenery. The air was comfortable, very different from the warm and dry environment around Firesource City. It was as if they had stepped into an entirely different world.

"Is this... a folded space? It's massive!" Zhang Xuan was stunned.

He had encountered quite a few folded spaces so far, and he even possessed a decent-sized one himself. However, one as large as the one before him... he had never thought that it would be possible for a folded space to be that large, let alone see one!

He had thought that his folded space was already rather incredible to span several hundred meters from one end to the other, but the one before him could house mountains and rivers that extended to the horizon. Frightening!

The larger a folded space was, the greater the pressure it would face from the external world, thus making it less stable.

How in the world did the master of the ancient domain manage to create and maintain such a large folded space?

Just as Zhang Xuan was completely astounded by the sight before him, Guild Leader Han's voice suddenly sounded at that moment. He quickly turned his gaze toward the latter, only to see the latter's body completely stiffened in shock.

"No, this isn't a folded space; this is a Spatial Formation!"

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Just some explanation:

In Library of Heaven's Path, seal is a type of formation as well, similar to Hidden Formation, Slaughter Formation, Beguilement Formation etc.

# Chapter 1039: Unbounded Voyager (1)

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"Spatial Formation?" Zhang Xuan asked in confusion.

He had heard of Confinement Formations, Illusory Formations, and Slaughter Formations, but a Spatial Formation... How was it different from folded spaces?

"Spatial Formation refers to the construction of space within a formation itself. Its stability is inferior to folded spaces, but its structure is more suited to contain other formations within it. In other words, there could be many Slaughter Formations, Beguilement Formations, Illusory Formations, and the sort hidden within it, making it extremely dangerous. Often, those who step into Spatial Formations aren't even aware of it themselves," Guild Leader Han said with a trembling voice.

As a 7-star pinnacle formation master, he knew how fearsome Spatial Formations were. Those who stepped into one would find their minds being led on by the distorted spatial laws within it, making it impossible for them to escape it. More importantly, it was possible that there could be other formidable Slaughter Formations or the sort hidden within the Spatial Formation, making it extremely dangerous for even the strongest of experts. As long as one hadn't reached Saint 9-dan, it would be near impossible to overcome it.

After hearing those words, the crowd couldn't help but frown.

They didn't fully comprehend how frightening Spatial Formations were, but for the composed Guild Leader Han to show such a response, there was no doubt that they were something extremely frightening.

"What if we were to destroy the Spatial Formation?" Zhang Xuan asked.

Regardless of how formidable a formation was, there was

nothing that couldn't be overcome with a kick from him. There was really no need for the other party to be so worried over this matter!

"Putting aside the fact that it is near impossible to destroy a Spatial Formation, unless you are capable of surviving the shattering of space, it would be wiser for you not to do," Guild Leader Han said.

Zhang Xuan's lips twitched upon hearing those words.

The shattering of space was not something that he could withstand even if he were to raise his cultivation by seven realms at this very instant. In shattered space, even a Primordial Spirit would be torn to shreds in an instant!

How could beings who existed in space possibly survive in the absence of it?

To make an analogy, what would hair latch onto in the absence of skin?

"Indeed! This is precisely why we can only advance along the path that the creator of the Spatial Formation has determined step by step." At this point, Guild Leader Han's voice suddenly grew grim. "At this point, I believe that we can say that we are already in the ancient domain. Every step that we take from this point onward will be fraught with dangers."

"Fraught with dangers..."

Those words left the crowd with grave expressions on their faces as well.

It was indeed very difficult for them to bypass the first two trials that they faced, but at the very least, it couldn't really have been considered dangerous.

For the first trial, even if they had not passed through the lava to reach the area beneath it, they would have been in no immediate danger for the time being.



As for the second trial, as long as they didn't attack the seal, it would have been possible for them to have survived in the area for several years without trouble.

But at this point, Guild Leader Han's words seemed to be indicating that danger was lurking everywhere around them. Regardless of whether they chose to move or remain stationary, to take on a passive approach or explore actively, danger could still spring forth at any moment.

They were going to face the true trial of the ancient domain from this point on.

"Since we are already here, we can only look forward and deal with whatever comes our way. If we are really in the ancient domain now, Zhang Yinqiu and the others should have passed through this area as well. As long as we can find a way to trace their route, we should be able to steer clear of most danger!" Wo Tianqiong said.

"You're right!" Others quickly voiced their agreement.

They had already prepared themselves for death when they made the decision to join the expedition back then. If they were truly already in the ancient domain, they should be glad that they were on the right track.

"Zhang Yinqiu and the others came by two years ago, so any traces they have left behind should have been erased by now. However, since he was able to send his Principal's Seal out, there is a good chance that he is currently trapped at a certain part of the ancient domain. If that deduction holds true, we should be able to find something while advancing ahead," Wu shi said as he took the lead.

There was no one who could say for sure at this point whether the old principal was dead or not. However, given that the latter had been able to send his Principal's Seal out, there was a good chance that he was still alive at this point. If so, he would have

surely left some traces behind so that they could find him. Otherwise, there would have been very little meaning to him sending a help signal to them.

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded as he activated his Eye of Insight to examine his surroundings.

A moment later, he couldn't help but shake his head.

Regardless of whether they were in a Spatial Formation or a folded space, there was one thing for sure—the person who had created the ancient domain possessed a cultivation far greater than his. The vast disparity in strength made it impossible for him to discern anything even through the powerful Eye of Insight.

Flaws! Zhang Xuan willed.

A moment later, he shook his head once more.

The Library of Heaven's Path could only compile a book on the items that he was in contact with or were currently active.

While the Spatial Formation was a formation as well, as the mountains and rivers in his surroundings weren't the direct manifestation of the Spatial Formation, he was unable to compile a book on it in the Library of Heaven's Path. The only way he could do so was probably only if he could get an overview of the functioning of the entire Spatial Formation.

This was similar to how he couldn't possibly use the sunrise and sunset or the changing weather to compile a book regarding the flaws of the Master Teacher Continent.

Even the overpowered Library of Heaven's Path couldn't work its wonders against something as expansive as the Spatial Formation they were in.

It seems like we can only proceed forward a step at the time. Seeing that there were no shortcuts he could take, Zhang Xuan sighed deeply in frustration before following behind the crowd.

Honestly speaking, the Spatial Formation was truly incredible. Had they not known that they were deep underground, beneath a hundred meters of lava, they might have really thought that they had entered a warm mountain range in the midst of spring.

Surrounded by lush green plants, the crowd couldn't help but forget the fear of being within an ancient domain. Slowly, a feeling of leisure crept upon them.

A light mountain breeze blew, and the leaves rustled under its tugging. Such natural call of nature left them feeling incredibly relaxed, as if they had entered a utopia free of hardship and struggles.

"It doesn't seem like there is any danger around?"

"Indeed! Not only so, the area is also very rich in spiritual energy. If the day comes when I wish to retire and back away from the material world, I think I would want to live here!"

"This is indeed a good environment, very suited for cultivating one's heart..."

...

The leisurely atmosphere in the air made the combat masters and master teachers a little more talkative than usual.

Previously, when Guild Leader Han spoke about how there might be dangers pouncing on them at every step, they had been scared out of their wits. But when they began making their way through the Spatial Formation, they realized that it was far from what Guild Leader Han had said. Rather than threatened, they felt calm and peaceful.

They couldn't help but desire to live in a place as peaceful as this for the rest of their lives.

Hearing those words, a thought suddenly sprouted within Guild Leader Han's eyes, and sharpness abruptly returned to his glazed eyes. "No, something is wrong. Everyone, stay alert! We are

already under attack!"

One of the combat masters chuckled. "We are under attack? Guild Leader Han, you must be joking! I'm sure that we will know if we are under attack!"

Another combat master nodded in agreement. "Indeed. I think Guild Leader Han is just being a little too apprehensive. There is no way so many of us wouldn't notice it if we are being attacked!"

As veterans of the battlefield, they were conditioned to instinctively retaliate toward any offense directed at them. If there was truly an attack against them, they couldn't possibly still be in the leisurely state they were in at the moment.

"An attack that is unnoticeable is the most fearsome of all!" Guild Leader Han exclaimed lividly.

If it was a direct attack, they would at least still have been able to put their lives on the line and fight their way out. What was truly frightening would be when one didn't even realize that one was being attacked. As if frogs being cooked in warm water, they wouldn't even notice what was happening to them until their moment of death!

"Did Guild Leader Han notice something?" Wu shi asked.

"Did you notice how our wariness has slackened ever since we entered this ancient domain? In our current state, there is no way we will be able to put up any defenses should danger abruptly spring on us!" Guild Leader Han said. "More importantly... did you notice that we have already been walking for some time now? Yet, the end is nowhere in sight. It is as if there is some kind of power pulling us along, making us walk for all eternity to come! There is something really amiss with the situation here."

"This..." Wu shi was taken aback.

Now that the other party had pointed it out explicitly to him, he also realized that there was something very wrong with the

situation as well.

In the first place, it was bizarre that they would be in such a leisurely state, neglecting to even put their guards up, considering the fact that they were venturing into uncharted territory. As veteran master teachers and combat masters, there was no way they would make such an elementary mistake.

Pu!

While the duo was still speaking, a peculiar sound echoed clearly ahead of them. Turning their gazes over, they saw that the face of the combat master who had just said that Guild Leader Han was being too apprehensive had turned ghastly pale, and blood was streaming down the corner of his mouth profusely. Yet, a smile remained plastered on his face as he trudged forward resolutely.

"This..."

That fellow was clearly in a bad state, his face turning paler at a visible rate as blood rained down his chin, but his lips were still curled up into the most peaceful of smiles.

This sight left goosebumps rising on the hands of the duo.

It was simply too eerie!

As knowledgeable and well-read as they were, they had never encountered something as sinister as this.

After taking a look, Wu shi observed with an awful complexion, "His current state is caused by exhaustion. His zhenqi has about to be depleted clean, and his stamina is swiftly approaching its limits."

As a 7-star master teacher, it wasn't too difficult for him to discern the source of injury of the combat master.

But... it hadn't been long since they had started walking?

Combat masters were renowned for their astounding endurance in battle, and yet, that fellow was already at his limits after such a

short walk?

Guild Leader Han couldn't help but be deeply perplexed by the bizarre matter. At this moment, Wu Shi suddenly exclaimed, "Guild Leader Han, take a look at your dantian!"

"Dantian?"

Taken aback by the abrupt words, Guild Leader Han hurriedly looked into his internal state, and what he saw left his eyes narrowing uncontrollably.

To his astonishment, the overwhelming zhenqi that he possessed had nearly been depleted as well. If one were to compare a cultivator's dantian to a lake, his would be one that had dried up to the point where one could already see the seabed.

"My zhenqi... How has it been depleted so quickly?" Guild Leader Han's body trembled in shock.

As a 7-star pinnacle formation master, a Saint 4-dan pinnacle expert, he was one of the strongest in the expedition, and he boasted the greatest zhenqi capacity as well. Putting aside walking, he could easily fight for four hours straight without being depleted.

But this... he had only walked for a short while—they weren't even flying—and yet, his dantian was nearly empty. What was happening?

This was really frightening!

Pu! Pu! Pu!

While Guild Leader Han was astonished over his internal state, the sound of someone spurting blood echoed around them once more. A few more combat masters who had a lower cultivation began spewing blood, and even Wo Tianqiong, Shen Pingchao, and Wu Ran had pale faces, and veins were popping from their temples. It looked like they were on the verge of running out of strength and collapsing.

This was exceptionally apparent for Wo Tianqiong, whose hair was turning white as well due to exhaustion. In this moment, it looked like he had aged by more than ten years.

"This..." Guild Leader Han's body shook fearfully as he turned a horrified glance toward Wu shi.

He knew that the Spatial Formation would be fraught with dangers, but he didn't expect such a thing to happen. In fact, he wasn't able to make sense out of what was happening either.

"I have no idea what's going on." Wu shi shook his head, too.

It was always difficult for those who were trapped within the box to obtain a clear view of their current situation. Despite the many books they had read, they were still unable to comprehend the bizarre situation they were in.

At this moment, Zhang Xuan spoke.

"It is probably the sound of the breeze in the mountain. It is placing us into a trance in which our bodies deplete zhenqi faster than normal, and even our life force is gradually being sapped as well. If we don't find a way out of this situation, we will only continue walking tirelessly forward until we finally exceed our limits and die!"

The duo hurriedly turned their gazes over, only to see the young man with a deep frown etched on his forehead, seemingly deep in contemplation over something.

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## Chapter 1040: Unbounded Voyager (2)

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"Sound of the breeze?" Wu shi, Guild Leader Han, and the others were stunned before turning to look at their surroundings.

The sound of the breeze was extremely light, mixed in with the rustling of the leaves. Previously, they had thought that it sounded calm and peaceful, putting them in a state of tranquility. Listening to it once more, however, they thought that it sounded sinister, and they couldn't help but tremble in fear.

"Let's try sealing off our hearing," Guild Leader Han said.

But even after the both of them did so, the wind continued to whistle right in their head, keeping them tightly under its control.

Zhang Xuan shook his head and sent a telepathic message to them.

"It's futile. The sound of the breeze is a type of demonic tune. Even if we seal our sixth sense, it will still travel to our soul directly, making it impossible to fend it off."

If it was possible to seal off demonic tunes just by covering one's ears, it wouldn't have been worthy of the adjective 'demonic', let alone exist as a unique occupation that had been passed down for more than several dozen thousand years.

The duo released the seal on their hearing and asked anxiously, "Then, what do we do?"

Unable to ward off the demonic tune, they would be trapped in this hell of perpetual movement. It had not been easy for them to get into the ancient domain; were they really going to lose their lives at the very start?

"Principal Zhang... since you were able to sense that it's a demonic tune, do you have a solution for it?" Wu shi asked anxiously.



After a moment of contemplation, Zhang Xuan replied, "This is the demonic tune from an 8-star demonic tunist; even I can only barely ward it off myself. If we intend to pull the others out of their trance, we will have to overcome the demonic tune with one of our own as well!"

He had noticed the demonic tune the moment he entered, and through his comprehension of demonic tunes and his Heaven's Path zhenqi, he was able to ward it off himself. However, he hadn't found a feasible to quell the demonic tune yet. There didn't seem to be any other way of going about doing it other than to overwhelm the sound of the breeze with his music, but to do so, he would have to achieve the level of proficiency comparable to an 8-star demonic tunist!

"Overcome the demonic tune with one of our own?"

The faces of the duo paled.

Where were they going to find an 8-star demonic tunist from out of the blue?

If they had a person of such capability in their ranks, the members of the expedition wouldn't have fallen into a trance in the first place.

Zhang Xuan shook his head. "This demonic tune should be around the level of 8-star primary, or else your Primordial Spirits would have been affected by it as well, causing you to be unaware of your injuries like the others. However, my level of proficiency in demonic tunes is only at 6-star pinnacle at the moment. Even if I use my full strength, I won't be able overcome it."

The sound of the breeze was equivalent to the playing of an 8-star primary demonic tunist, or else there was no way Guild Leader Han and Wu shi would have been able to retain their consciousness before the sound.

Nevertheless, it was still at a level that Zhang Xuan couldn't

stand against; his current strength was still too weak.

"What do we do then?"

"Do any of you have 7-star demonic tunist books?" Zhang Xuan asked.

If he could gather sufficient 7-star demonic tunist books to compile the 7-star Heaven's Path Demonic Tune Art, he would be able to face off with the 8-star primary demonic tune easily.

"7-star demonic tunist books?"

Guild Leader Han and Wu shi traded gazes before shaking their heads simultaneously.

One of them was a formation master whereas the other was a master teacher. While Wu shi had seven 7-star supporting occupation, it happened that demonic tunist was not one of them. As such, he didn't have such books with him.

"That will make things even more troublesome then." Zhang Xuan frowned.

If he couldn't raise his capabilities as a demonic tunist, it would be extremely hard for him to suppress the demonic tune.

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan said, "Why don't we do this? The both of you try to take care of the group here, make sure that they don't overexert themselves. If they are really reaching their limit, feed them a pill or something so as to replenish their zhenqi and stamina. Meanwhile, I will be trying to find the source of the sound. If I am able to find it, I might just be able to resolve the problem."

Since it was impossible for him to overcome with brute force, he would just have to search for the origin of the sound. Perhaps, he might be able to find a flaw regarding it there and destroy it at its source.

"Un. We will be troubling Principal Zhang then."

The duo bowed deeply.

Left with no other alternatives, this was the best option they had.

"There's no need to stand on ceremony." Zhang Xuan hurriedly helped them up before rushing in the direction where the sound of the breeze seemed to have come from.

The sound of the breeze was extremely faint, but there was a certain quality to it that left one feeling as if the world was spinning should one attempt to focus one's hearing on it. Had it not been for Zhang Xuan refining his soul further through the lava, he might have succumbed then and there.

Still feeling a little worried, Zhang Xuan took a glance backward and saw Wu Shi and Guild Leader Han feeding a few of the combat masters who had just spurted blood earlier several pills, and their pale complexions alleviated considerably.

While the demonic tune causes a cultivator to deplete their zhenqi and stamina unnecessarily, it isn't really that dangerous. As long as the others are able to consume pills in time to replenish their energy, they should be able to hold on for quite a while, Zhang Xuan noted.

Even so, they were still marching forward uncontrollably, as if puppets on a string. At this point, they had also realized something was amiss, and they attempted to struggle against it as well. However, their efforts were completely futile.

To be completely helpless despite knowing that one was headed toward danger, unable to escape or retaliate... It was due to this that demonic tunists were so feared throughout the Master Teacher Continent, such that even the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy had a specialized school devoted to the occupation.

After flying for around half an hour, Zhang Xuan came to an abrupt stop and frowned. He had flown several hundred kilometers, and yet, he realized that there was no change in the

breeze sound at all. This meant that he wasn't even close to finding its source.

Wasn't the area of the sound a little too vast?

Taking himself as an example, the demonic tunes he played could place anyone within a radius of several hundred meters into a trance, and anything beyond that would be extremely strenuous and difficult for him. Even for an 8-star demonic tunist, it was unimaginable that the other party was capable of playing music that could span over a radius of several hundred kilometers!

If that was the case, wouldn't an 8-star demonic tunist be able to place several hundred million men into a trance simultaneously just by playing within the capital of any empire? Not even master teachers wielded prowess comparable to that!

At this point, Zhang Xuan suddenly recalled a certain urban legend from his previous life known as the supernatural wall 1 . Could this be the work of the Spatial Formation? I am certain that I have been walking in a single direction, but somehow, it seems as if I have been walking in circles, making no progress whatsoever.

Could it have been that his senses had been distorted to make him walk in endless circles?

In truth, such happenings weren't too rare in formations either.

Many Beguilement Formations had the effect of messing with a person's sense of direction or even the compass in their hands. They might be thinking that they were headed east, but in truth, they were headed in an entirely different direction.

Since this area has the effect of confusing one's sense of direction, I should set up a formation to help me with my directions.

Frowning, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and took out a couple of formation flags.

He might have been unable to oppose the sound of the breeze

with his current mastery of demonic tunes, but his proficiency in formations had already reached 7-star pinnacle. He could easily set up a formation that could help him navigate his way through the Spatial Formation.

Many formations flashed through Zhang Xuan's mind, and before long, a certain blueprint stood out. With a smile, he flicked his wrist.

Hu!

The formation flags immediately scattered from his hands, landing in specific positions.

Weng!

With a buzz, the formation came to life. Standing in the middle of it, Zhang Xuan closed his eyes.

Zhang Xuan smirked. As I thought! My sense of direction has indeed been distorted!

Through the formation, he could instantaneously tell that the direction he had been heading in previously was leading him in endless circles.

It seemed like the demonic tune wasn't the only thing that one had to be aware of in the Spatial Formation. If he hadn't noticed the issue with his sense of direction, he might very well have ended up walking for an eternity without walking out of the formation.

The old principal and the others should have taken the 'Direction Probing Needle', which Wu Yangzi forged all those years ago, with them. While the Direction Probing Needle isn't a saint artifact, it is exceptionally effective in identifying directions. Most likely, it was due to such an artifact that they were able to find their way out of this Spatial Formation, Zhang Xuan thought.

It was apparent that the old principal had gotten out of the Spatial Formation. Otherwise, he would have reduced to bones long ago, and it would have been impossible for him to send out

the Principal's Seal either.

Considering how they were able to find their way out despite possessing a cultivation far lower than Wu shi and the others, it was certain that they had some kind of valuable artifact on them.

After reading through the many books in the Blacksmith School, Zhang Xuan was aware that there was a treasure that Wu Yangzi had deposited in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy known as the Direction Probing Needle!

It was a unique artifact that had been forged out of the elusive Direction Probing Wood. It couldn't be considered a saint artifact, but in the field of finding directions, there were barely any situations where it would fail.

However, it wasn't often that one would be in a situation that required such a tool, and Wu Yangzi didn't think that he would need it either. Thus, he had decided to donate it to the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy.

Before heading to Firesource City to meet the others, Zhang Xuan had visited the treasure vault of the academy, but he didn't find the Direction Probing Needle in there. Most likely, the old principal had borrowed it for the exploration of the ancient domain.

It was also fortunate that he had done so as well.

Of course, how long they took to clear the ancient domain was another matter entirely. Considering the limitations of the old principal's cultivation, it should have taken him a while to snap out from the trance of the demonic tunes, and he probably needed a little more time to realize the peculiarity regarding the Spatial Formation. In any case, Zhang Xuan didn't think that the old principal and his expedition team would have been able to resolve the matter as quickly as he did.

After all, even Wu shi only realized that there was something

amiss but couldn't pinpoint what it was back then. Zhang Xuan was the only one who had been able to see everything clearly due to his imperviousness to demonic tunes.

After confirming the direction, he leaped out from the formation and began flying in the direction he had identified via his formation earlier.

However, after flying roughly ten kilometers, he suddenly felt that he might have deviated from his original path once more. Thus, he quickly set up the same formation once more and swiftly found the correct direction before proceeding ahead.

After repeating the same cycle thrice, he finally found a massive stone tablet of three meters tall and two meters wide towering before him. It had a slightly pale exterior that seemed to hint at the long history behind it, battered by the wind and rain alike for many years.

It was vibrating gently, emitting a pleasant sound that intoxicated minds.

Walking up to it, Zhang Xuan saw three massive words inscribed majestically on it.

'The Unbounded World?'

Zhang Xuan frowned.

Gazing further down, he noticed several lines of smaller words written beneath the three massive words.

'All who enter the Unbounded World will be placed under the effects of a demonic tune, falling into a trance. Only those with the most resolute of minds will be able to break free of the trance and forge a path through this maze that I have built.

'Those who are capable of breaking free of the demonic tunes and find their way here within three days will be bestowed with my secret art. Those who manage to do so within ten days will be granted a life-changing encounter. Those who exceed ten days, I

can only say that your aptitude is lacking. Since it is fate that you managed to find this tablet, allow me to advise you to leave this land as soon as possible!'

After reading the words on the tablet, Zhang Xuan blinked vacantly.

From the point that I stepped through the door till this moment, I think... it hasn't even been an hour yet. To bestow a secret art upon those who manage to find this tablet within three days, isn't this test a little too easy? Surely, there can't be any who are so foolish as to not realize that something is amiss even after three whole days, right? Zhang Xuan thought as he turned his gaze further lower down the stone tablet.

Several words in a different handwriting from those above came into sight.

'I, Zhang Yinqiu, together with my team, was lost within these lands for around half a month. With my humble capabilities, I dare not expect to earn anything out of this ancient domain. All I hope is that I arrived in time to stop the Otherworldly Demons.'

The old principal was lost in the Spatial Formation for more than half a month? Zhang Xuan's lips twitched awkwardly. Who would have thought that there are really people that foolish?

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# Chapter 1041: Secret Art

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In Zhang Xuan's opinion, the moment that something happened to one of the expedition members while walking in the Spatial Formation, the group should have immediately realized that something was amiss. From that, it shouldn't be too difficult for them to deduce that they had been assaulted by demonic tunes. Through some trial and error, no matter how foolish they were, two to three days should have been more than sufficient for them to get to the stone tablet.

Yet, who would have thought that the old principal would actually take more than half a month to get here?

Weren't they a little too dimwitted to take that long?

Perhaps, it was due to the limitations of their cultivation. After all, even Principal Wo Tianqiong and the others were stuck in a trance for quite some time themselves, unaware of the changes in their surroundings.

After some contemplation, Zhang Xuan came up with a possible explanation.

Most of the expedition members that the old principal had brought along were the elders of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, Saint 1-dan cultivators. Even the strongest of them all would only have been at Spiritual Perception realm.

So, it was likely that they had been in the same position as Wo Tianqiong and the other combat masters. As soon as they arrived, they were already put into a trance, making them unaware of their surroundings or even the state that they were in as well.

In such a situation, it would have been a huge blessing if they knew that they should consume a pill to replenish their energy, let alone uncovering the secrets of the Unbounded World.

But since the old principal has left his words here, it goes to show

that he has managed to walk out of this area alive, Zhang Xuan noted.

This was the first trace of the old principal that they had encountered so far after all of the dangers they had been through, and with this, they could be entirely certain that they were on the right path.

It is written on the stone tablet that anyone who manages to reach this point within three days will be bestowed with a secret art. Let's see what kind of secret art I will get.

Knowing that it was more important to focus on what was ahead of him at this moment, Zhang Xuan turned his attention back to the stone tablet.

The stone tablet was made out of some kind of particularly heavy material, planting it firmly in place.

Circling around the stone tablet, he swiftly noticed a groove on it that one could place one's palm in. It felt as if some kind of unique power would come to life just by coming into contact with it.

To be careful, Zhang Xuan closely examined the stone tablet, and only after verifying that there were no dangers regarding it did he finally heave a sigh of relief. Nevertheless, he still prepared several defensive measures before finally reaching out to place his palm on the groove.

It couldn't be helped. They hadn't gotten a grasp on the identity or personality of the master of the ancient domain yet, so it was still best to remain on guard.

Weng!

As soon as his palm came into contact with the groove, a brilliant flash of light burst into the air, and the seemingly omnipresent demonic tune abruptly came to a halt.

Seeing this sight, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

With the halting of the demonic tune, the other members would finally be free from the effects of the demonic tunes, and the depletion of their zhenqi and stamina should have come to a stop, putting them out of harm's way.

Jiyaya!

The stone tablet suddenly jolted once more, and as if some kind of unique mechanism or formation had come to life, a loud 'hu!' sounded. Following which, a figure came into appearance.

The figure was an elder with white hair and a beard. Despite being a mere fragmented soul, he emanated a sharp aura that exerted immense pressure upon one's psyche.

Wariness immediately surfaced in Zhang Xuan's eyes as he took a step back. Powerful...

The elder was only a mere fragmented soul at the moment, on the verge of flickering out of existence after the passing of innumerable years. However, if the old elder were to make a move against him at this moment, there would still be nothing Zhang Xuan could do about it.

Even as a fragmented soul, the elder wielded absolute power that Zhang Xuan could never hope to rival in his current state. There was no doubt that the elder had at least been a Saint 5-dan expert back when he was still alive.

Otherwise, there was no way the other party could have left him feeling so apprehensive.

"There's no need to tense up, I mean you no harm. Allow me to introduce myself, I am the master of this ancient domain." Seemingly noticing the wariness in Zhang Xuan's eyes, the figure smiled. The elder spoke in an approving tone. "Considering how you were able to see through my trap and find this location so quickly, your mental resilience and eye of discernment are far superior to others. There is no doubt that you are qualified to learn

my secret art!"

He had set the time limit to be three days, but the other party had spent no more than an hour to overcome his traps and find this stone tablet. Such an accomplishment was beyond his expectations.

With his hands behind his back, the elder said, "As a fragmented soul, I won't be able to remain here for long. So, hurry up and acknowledge me as your teacher!"

"Acknowledge you as my teacher?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

"Indeed. If you wish to obtain my heritage, you have to become part of my lineage. Otherwise, how can I impart my secret art to you?" the elder replied with a nod.

Lineage was extremely important when it came to the impartation of techniques. It was improper to learn the secret arts of another without becoming the other party's student.

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but hesitate. "This..."

In his long journey, he had never acknowledged anyone as his teacher before. Even Kong shi had ended up being rejected by him.

Thus, he couldn't help but feel extremely reluctant to acknowledge a person from a shady background and whose name he didn't even know as his teacher.

Noticing Zhang Xuan's conflicted expression, the elder asked in astonishment, "What? Are you unwilling?"

Back when he was alive, the line of people who were queuing up to become his student could easily have circled a city many times over, and yet... he was offering to take the other party as his student so as to pass on his secret art, and yet, the other party was still hesitating. He couldn't help but find this situation unbelievable.

After a moment of thought, Zhang Xuan replied, "It is not that I am unwilling, but I already have a teacher of my own. Without his permission, it would be improper of me to take another man as my teacher."

He had created the identity 'Yang Xuan' to make things convenient for him, so naturally, he had no qualms about bringing it out in this situation either.

Upon hearing Zhang Xuan's worries, the elder chuckled softly. "It is impossible for a person to acknowledge only a single person as their teacher throughout their entire life. Even Kong shi acknowledged many teachers back then. This isn't something you need to worry about!"

Even though Kong shi was the World's Teacher, he had not been born almighty. It was through the accumulation of experiences and knowledge that he had eventually become the great man that he was. Naturally, it went without saying that he had taken many people as his teacher over the course of his journey as well, learning from their strengths to better himself.

Since that was the case for him, it should have been even more so for others. There was really no need for others to hesitate over such a matter.

"Elder, your words ring true. I was being too obsessed with appearances." Zhang Xuan nodded. A moment later, with a light smile, he continued. "I am willing to acknowledge you as my teacher, but is it possible for you to demonstrate the secret art that you are intending to impart to me first?"

"That's not a problem," the elder replied.

It was normal for a student to want to see how powerful the teacher was before acknowledging the other party. After all, there was no one who would wish to acknowledge someone who was less skilled than them as their teacher.

If he could win the other party's admiration, the other party would be more willing to acknowledge him as his teacher.

While such a request could be seen as a challenge toward his authority, considering that many years had passed since then and he hadn't revealed his identity either, it wasn't too surprising that he'd asked such a thing of him.

The elder placed his hands behind his back, and a strong air of confidence and indomitability burst forth from him.

"The secret art that I am going to impart you is a movement technique known as the Unbounded Voyager. There is a total of five dans to it, and if you cultivate it to Consummation, you will be able to disregard the confines of space itself and travel to wherever you want to in the shortest time possible!"

"Unbounded Voyager?" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in excitement.

He had never heard of this movement technique before, but just from the majestic name alone, he could tell that it was an extremely fearsome move.

No wonder this Spatial Formation was known as the Unbounded World. Most likely, on top of assessing a cultivator's mental resilience, it also served to examine their understanding of space and direction as well.

Only those who possessed superior aptitude would be able to sense that something was amiss and find a solution to reach the stone tablet. And truthfully, if not for Zhang Xuan's enhanced senses from cultivating the Heaven's Path techniques, it would have been difficult for him to notice that something was amiss.

"Indeed. Barriers there may be between the heavens and earth, but the true voyager treads unbounded. If one wishes to learn the most advanced of movement techniques, they must abandon the boundaries they limit themselves by. Only when one's heart is unbounded can one travel unrestrained throughout the world," the

figure said calmly.

Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

This was similar to how true swordsmanship, at its very core, was devoid of any maneuvers. To be limited by one's maneuvers signified that one was still stuck at the elementary level of swordsmanship.

True secret arts were techniques that had already surpassed the level of fixed maneuvers.

Even though Zhang Xuan had never seen the Unbounded Voyager before, he could tell just from those words alone that it was an extraordinary technique.

"Since you wish to see it, allow me to enlighten you!" Noticing the young man's astonishment, the elder knew that he had already succeeded in winning the other party over, and a smile surfaced on his lips.

Hu!

There was no apparent movement at all, but the elder simply vanished on the spot. In the next moment, he was already several kilometers away.

How swift! Zhang Xuan's eyes widened in astonishment.

He had been unable to follow the other party's movements with his eyes at all; it was already at a level comparable to teleportation! As powerful as the Heaven's Path Movement Art was, it appeared as slow as a snail in comparison to the Unbounded Voyager.

Of course, it didn't mean that the Heaven's Path Movement Art was an inferior technique. Rather, it was solely due to the huge difference in the tiers of both techniques.

The Heaven's Path Movement Art he was still cultivating at the moment was compiled based on the fundamental movement techniques that he had collected so far, and it hadn't even reached

Saint-tier. It was understandable that it was weaker than the Unbounded Voyager.

Hu!

While Zhang Xuan was in shock, the figure in the distance suddenly blurred, and in an instant, it abruptly returned to where it had been before. It was as if the elder had never moved in the first place, and the figure in the distance had just been a product of his imagination!

"Are you willing to learn it?" the elder asked with a chuckle.

Back then, even Kong shi had been filled with praise for this movement technique of his. He didn't believe that there was anyone who could reject it.

"Your movement technique is indeed incredible, but..."

Halfway through his words, Zhang Xuan suddenly paused, seemingly hesitating over something.

"But?" The elder frowned.

"There are a few flaws with it that compromise its strength," Zhang Xuan replied with a conflicted expression.

"Flaws? What arrogance! Someone of your strength is actually able to discern flaws in my movement technique?" Not expecting the young man before him to be so arrogant, the elder waved his hand in displeasure.

Paying no heed to the elder's rage, Zhang Xuan began speaking. "Firstly, when you were moving earlier, even though it happened so swiftly that it was hardly discernible, if I am not mistaken, you utilized zhenqi threads to facilitate the movement.

"The concept behind the technique is simple. It is to first thread one's zhenqi to the area where one intends to move to before dragging one's body over like a puppet. This allows one to move from area to area with inconceivable speed, such that it is almost at



the level of teleportation, but it has a major flaw as well. If an enemy were to notice the secret behind the technique and sever the thread beforehand, it could lead to one travelling to an unexpected area instead. Should such a scenario occur in battle, it could end up leading one to expose a fatal weakness to one's enemy.

"Secondly, the technique is extremely demanding on one's zhenqi. While it does allow one to escape a fatal situation and flee to a safe location temporarily, the huge depletion of zhenqi resulting from it might deprive one of the ability to stand against one's enemy. Furthermore, if one's zhenqi were to run dry from the execution of the technique, it wouldn't take long for one's enemy to catch up, thus placing one in an extremely dangerous position. As such, it is not a technique that one can frequently use in battle.

"Thirdly, moving at such speed is highly strenuous on one's body. You are able to do it easily because you are currently in the form of a soul, making you unaffected by the limitations of a body. On the other hand, a normal cultivator will require at least a body with the resilience comparable to a Saint-tier artifact before they can exert the technique without incurring any injuries. How powerful must one be to obtain a physical body on par with Saint-tier artifacts? Do you have a physical body cultivation technique that can raise one's physical body to Saint-tier? If you don't have any... is there any meaning in learning this movement technique?"

"You..."

The elder had not paid the other party much heed at the start, but after hearing those words, his expression changed.

# Chapter 1042: Acknowledge Me as Your Teacher and I Will Teach You!

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There were no mistakes in what the other party said at all. The first two flaws were still not much of an issue. It wasn't easy for the crux of the Unbounded Voyager to be found due to its sheer speed, and if it was utilized well in battle, it could be a powerful weapon to catching one's opponent off guard.

However, the third problem was indeed an issue that had been plaguing him for much time.

The reason he had been able to cultivate the movement technique was due to the unique bloodline that flowed through his body, granting him a body superior to the others. Even without cultivating his physical body, he could still easily execute the technique without suffering any damage. However, the same could not be said about others. The Unbounded Voyager was a powerful movement technique, but it was impossible to master without a powerful body to withstand its overwhelming prowess.

If one were to attempt to cultivate it forcefully, one might end up incurring devastating damage to one's body instead, resulting in a steep decline in one's cultivation.

However, this was a problem that only those who had started cultivating the Unbounded Voyager would understand. For the other party to be able to discern such a problem with just a glance, wasn't his eye of discernment a little too formidable? Was he really just a Nascent Saint?

On the other hand, noticing the expression on the elder's face, Zhang Xuan chuckled softly.

Even without utilizing his Library of Heaven's Path, he could still easily find numerous flaws in the other party's movement technique.

In fact, back when he first cultivated the Heaven's Path Movement Art, he had met with the same problem as well. Due to the lacking resilience of his physical body, his body was nearly torn apart from the astounding speed he was traveling at.

It was even more so for the Unbounded Voyager. Moving at the speed nearly comparable to teleportation, if one's physical body didn't meet the prerequisite, one would suffer devastating damage just by executing the technique.

In the end, after everything the other party had said, the technique was only feasible when paired with exceptional zhenqi capacity and an incredibly resilient body, or else it would only end up hindering one.

Of course, if one could meet the two prerequisites for the technique, the Unbounded Voyager could become a powerful trump card in battle, allowing one to become invincible within one's cultivation realm.

As such, there was no way Zhang Xuan was going to let such a valuable technique slip through his fingers. But for him to acknowledge another man as his teacher, impossible!

"How is it? Is there a mistake in what I have said?" Smiling, Zhang Xuan turned to the elder with a glint in his eyes.

After a moment of hesitation, the elder replied, "There is indeed nothing wrong with what you have said. That is also the reason I only impart this technique to those who possess superior aptitude. The fact that you could pass through the lava, as well as approach the seal outside and destroy it, shows that your physical body has already reached an incredible level. On top of that, your ability to find this stone tablet within the allocated time limit also shows that you possess a powerful soul and a vast capacity of zhenqi. Since that is the case, you have already met the prerequisites for the cultivation of the Unbounded Voyager. The issues that you have stated aren't problems for you."

Be it the lava or the seal, they were trials that he had left behind to test those who entered the Spatial Formation. Since the other party had come this far, it meant that the other party had already met the basic requirements for the cultivation of the technique.

As such, the flaws that the other party had mentioned weren't issues either.

"I do possess the required ability to cultivate the Unbounded Voyager. It's just that... I happen to wield the ability to improve the Unbounded Voyager and make it even stronger. Are you willing to listen?" Zhang Xuan asked with a smile.

"Improve the Unbounded Voyager? Impossible!" The elder shook his head.

His cultivation had reached an astounding level before his death, but even so, he had still been unable to find a way to advance the Unbounded Voyager. How could the mere Nascent Saint before him possibly possess the ability to do so?

"There's no need to rush into denying the matter. Why don't we do this instead? Allow me to take a peek at the Unbounded Voyager cultivation technique, and I will point out the flaws in it for you. You can make your choice after hearing my analysis and see whether there is a mistake in it or not," Zhang Xuan said.

"I'm fine with that. In any case, I was intending to pass down the secret art to you anyway, so it's not a problem. However... I am only a fragmented soul, and the time I have is severely limited. It is probably going to be several hours before you are done reading, and I don't think that I can last until then," the elder said.

The aim of leaving behind his ancient domain was to pass down his cultivation technique to the later generations, and the young man before him was a person who had passed his trial. Naturally, he would impart the Unbounded Voyager to the young man. However, the Unbounded Voyager was an incredibly profound technique that even the most talented of people would at least

require several hours before they could finish reading the entire book, let alone find the flaws in it!

As a fragmented soul, the time he had left was sorely lacking. Chances were that he would dissipate before the other party even finished browsing through the book, making it impossible for him to verify the authenticity of the other party's words.

"I don't need several hours. As long as you can allow me a look at the cultivation technique, I will be able to find the flaws in it for you within a minute!" Zhang Xuan smiled.

"A minute?" The elder stared at the young man before him doubtfully.

After a moment of hesitation, the elder flicked his wrist, and a series of words reminiscent of the Milky Way abruptly materialized in the sky.

It was the manual for the Unbounded Voyager.

Sweeping through it, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but be astonished.

Just as the other party had said, there were five dans to the technique, and each dan represented a realm. Even if he just cultivated the 1-dan to Consummation, the speed that he could travel at would increase by leaps and bounds.

That meant that he would be able to display a far greater fighting prowess than before as well.

As astonished as Zhang Xuan was, he didn't allow it to show on his face. Exhaling deeply, he turned to the elder and remarked with a light smile, "This Unbounded Voyager is indeed a formidable technique, but... if I am not mistaken, there should be nine flaws in it, right?"

"You..." Shocked by Zhang Xuan's words, the elder began trembling uncontrollably.

Back then, he had asked Kong shi to evaluate this movement technique of his, and the latter did mention that there were nine flaws with it as well. However, instead of correcting the technique for him, Kong shi had only pointed them out to him and asked him to think of a way to resolve them himself.

When he opened the ancient domain, his strength hadn't reached its peak yet, and he had yet to find a way to resolve the issues in the Unbounded Voyager. Thus, he could only leave the flawed movement technique behind.

Who would have thought that the person he was intending to pass the movement technique down to would be able to come to the same conclusion just by taking a glimpse at the manual? Wasn't his eye of discernment way too terrifying?

"Firstly, in the cultivation of the 1-dan, when driving one's zhenqi through the Bimen acupoint, it will produce an effect of temporary blindness. With a bit of bad luck, it is possible that one might even lose one's sense of sight permanently. Am I right?"

"This... You're right." After a moment of hesitation, the elder nodded.

That was exactly what Kong shi had said to him back then!

Back when he had just started cultivating the Unbounded Voyager 1-dan, he had indeed encountered signs of losing his sense of sight. It was fortunate that Kong shi had saved him then and resolved his trauma.

Zhang Xuan continued. "The reason for the occurrence of such a situation is due to the zhenqi threads passing through the Mingmou acupoint. There are some problems with the circulation pathway of the technique, and as long as the correct pathway isn't found, such a situation will occur."

The Library of Heaven's Path couldn't correct the flaws by itself and provide him with a flawless Unbounded Voyager.

Nevertheless, just by pointing out the flaws alone, he could still easily win the other party's trust.

Without giving the other party any time to recover from his shock, Zhang Xuan pushed on. "The second flaw is also within the cultivation of the Unbounded Voyager 1-dan. During the cultivation process, it must be completed within a single breath. If one were to run out of zhenqi in the process and fail to push into the Shenxing acupoint, there is a good chance that one might become paralyzed for life..."

The crux to the incredible speed of the Unbounded Voyager lay in the opening of the Shenxing acupoint.

However, the acupoint was located at the center of one's feet, and it was an extraordinarily difficult acupoint to open. It was highly demanding on the purity and quantity of zhenqi one harnessed. The slightest deviation that occurred in this stage could result in full body paralysis!

Even though he had been spared from that unfortunate outcome back when he was cultivating it, a couple of students he had accepted later on weren't as lucky as him. Instead of mastering the technique, they had ended up losing their ability to walk instead.

All along, he had thought that it was due to his students' weak body and lacking zhenqi. He had thought that, as long he could find someone who possessed a bloodline as powerful as his, the problem could be averted entirely. However, at that moment, the young man was saying the very same words that Kong shi had told him back then, and this left him thinking that the matter might not have been as simple as he thought it was.

"The third flaw is in the Unbounded Voyager 2-dan. While cultivating that realm, the driving of one's zhenqi through that point could lead to the breeding of Inner Demons..."

"The fourth flaw lies in the 3-dan..."

"The fifth flaw..."

...

In a single breath, Zhang Xuan spilled out the nine flaws in the Unbounded Voyager in detail.

These were all reflected in the Library of Heaven's Path, so he only had to read them out accordingly.

"... and these are the nine flaws that I have identified. Is there any mistake with my analysis?"

"T-this..." The elder trembled uncontrollably as he retracted the words in the sky before nodding. "There is no mistake at all. Your analysis is correct!"

At that moment, there was no word that could possibly describe the immense shock he was feeling.

The manual for the Unbounded Voyager consisted of over ten thousand words, and the meaning behind them was extremely profound as well. Even he would have needed several hours before he could fully make sense out of the entire manual. Yet, with a simple glance, the other party had been able to point out the flaws in it, and it was exactly the same as what Kong shi had said back then. His eye of discernment was truly frightening!

His talent was nowhere beneath that of Kong shi's!

"Do you believe that I can improve the Unbounded Voyager for you now?" Zhang Xuan said.

The elder was conflicted for a short moment before eventually nodding. "... I do."

Judging from how the other party was able to point out the flaws in the Unbounded Voyager with just a glance, it wouldn't be too difficult for him to correct them and bring it a step closer to perfection.

"Good. Right, there is something that I want to ask you. Did a



group of master teachers pass by this area two years ago? May I know if they are still living?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"There was indeed a group of master teachers who passed by this stone tablet two years ago. However, as they didn't find the way out of the Unbounded World in the allocated time, I didn't impart my secret art to them, simply sending them away. However, they didn't listen to my advice and chose to continue onward. As this soul of mine is bound here, I am not too sure about how they fared in the later trials," the elder replied.

Despite being a soul fragment of the ancient domain's master, he was effectively no different from a puppet that had been left behind to stand guard in the Unbounded World. Anything beyond this trial was outside his scope of authority, so he had no way of peeking and learning about it.

"Alright then." Hearing the explanation, Zhang Xuan sighed deeply and nodded.

He had thought that he could receive some vital news from the other party, but it seemed like he could only take one step at a time.

Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan was about to turn around and leave when the elder behind him suddenly spoke up. "Since you know the way to perfecting the Unbounded Voyager, can you share it with me?"

This question had been plaguing him for the longest time. As he had been left behind in the Unbounded World before these problems could be resolved, he had never had a chance to learn of the solutions to resolving the problems.

While the time he had left was limited, if he could learn of the correct cultivation technique before his dissipation, his life wouldn't have been spent in vain.

If this final regret of his could be resolved, he wouldn't mind

even if he were to dissipate then and there!

Halting in his footsteps, Zhang Xuan turned around and asked, "You wish to know how to resolve the flaws of the Unbounded Voyager?"

"That's right!" The elder nodded. "If you can enlighten me, I will be extremely grateful to you!"

Since the other party had been able to see through the flaws in his cultivation technique with just a single look, he dared not pull his weight and say words about how he was going to impart the Unbounded Voyager to the other party anymore.

Chuckling softly, Zhang Xuan placed his hands behind his back, and an indomitable aura burst forth from him, as if a deity that had descended from the heavens.

"Acknowledge me as your teacher, and I will impart it to you!"

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# Chapter 1043: Field of Lightning

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"..."

The elder staggered. For a moment there, he nearly dissipated on the spot.

The reason he had left his fragmented soul behind was to accept new students so as to pass down his secret art to the later generations, not to acknowledge other people as his teacher!

Yet, not only did he fail to score himself his student, the other party was even intending to take him on as a student. The immense frustration that he felt left him feeling like he was going to explode on the spot.

But thinking back, he was the person who had said 'If you wish to obtain my heritage, you have to join my lineage. Otherwise, how can I impart my secret art to you?'

Now that he wanted the other party to impart the perfected Unbounded Voyager to him, it went without saying that the same rules should apply as well. Why should the other party teach him otherwise?

"Alright, I was being too superficial then..." Shaking his head, the elder decided to ask no more. Turning his gaze to Zhang Xuan, he said, "The true ancient domain lies beyond me, and you will face far greater danger than this. I wish you the best in your journey."

After saying those words, the silhouette of the elder began to fade.

Normally, the other party should have been able to maintain his existence for some time. However, after suffering the heavy blow from Zhang Xuan, the other party found himself unable to hold on any longer.

Hu!

The elder vanished from sight, and cracks swiftly crept across the stone tablet before him.

Kacha, kacha!

In the blink of an eye, it had already collapsed into a pile of rubble on the ground.

"You haven't told me what your name is..." Not expecting the other party to vanish so abruptly, Zhang Xuan was dazed.

In truth, when he said that he could correct the flaws of the Unbounded Voyager and improve it, it had been nothing more than a ploy to lure the other party into taking out the manual. The movement techniques that he had collected thus far were simply too weak; it was impossible to compile them with such an advanced technique.

As such, even though Zhang Xuan could easily point out the flaws regarding the Unbounded Voyager, it was impossible for him to correct them.

Seeing how earnestly the other party was seeking guidance from him, he had no choice but to use the other party's words against him. Who would have thought that the other party would vanish shortly after he finished saying those words?

He had received the other party's Unbounded Voyager manual, but in the end, he realized that he didn't even know the other party's name.

Facing the shattered stone tablet before him, Zhang Xuan bowed deeply. "Elder, thank you for your movement technique. I will surely bring it glory so as to not let you down!"

No matter what, the other party deserved an earnest bow from him.

This Unbounded Voyager might be powerful, but I am still unable to cultivate it yet.

After paying his respects to the elder, Zhang Xuan turned his attention back to the movement technique that he had just obtained, and he couldn't help but shake his head helplessly.

His zhenqi and physical body did meet the required mark, allowing him to execute the technique without his zhenqi running dry or his physical body being strained beyond its limit. However, there was another issue that Zhang Xuan was particularly concerned with... there were simply too many flaws with the technique!

He really couldn't bring himself to practice such a flawed technique.

Just the flaw in the first dan of the movement technique could potentially deprive him of his vision. He didn't wish to become blind from practicing this technique.

It seemed like he would really have to find higher tier movement technique manuals to compile together with the Unbounded Voyager so as to perfect it when he got out.

In any case, the Heaven's Path Movement Art was sufficient for the time being, so there was no need for him to take the risk.

Alright, I should return first. Since the sound of the breeze has stopped, they should have all recovered from their trance too. I should head back to find them now.

Putting aside the Unbounded Voyager for the time being, Zhang Xuan turned around and returned in the direction he had come from.

The other expedition members had been under the control of the demonic tune previously, but with the disappearance of the sound of the breeze, they should have recovered from their trance.

Along the way, he took back the various formations he had set up on the way to point out the direction for him, and not too long later, he finally returned to where he had parted with Wu shi and

the others. Taking a look at the surroundings, he couldn't help but frown grimly.

There was not a person in sight, but the entire area was a mess. Innumerable depressions could be seen all around, and fresh blood was scattered here and there. It seemed as if a ferocious fight had just happened in the area.

Zhang Xuan clenched his fists tightly. What happened?

Wu Shi and the others were Saint 4-dan experts. What kind of danger could they have encountered that would result in such an intense battle, such that they wouldn't even have the time to leave a message or the sort for him?

Eye of Insight!

Knowing that the expedition team might have met with danger, Zhang Xuan dared not hesitate. He swiftly scanned his surroundings carefully, and before long, a faint trail appeared before his eyes.

Follow it!

Zhang Xuan immediately tracked the trail with hastened footsteps.

The Otherworldly Demons?

Not too long later, he stumbled by yet another battlefield. This time, not only was there the blood of humans, there were also the carcasses of two slaughtered Otherworldly Demons.

Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes in alarm. This is bad...

It might have taken some time for others to analyze the carcasses to deduce the power level of the Otherworldly Demons before their deaths, but as one who possessed the Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan could do it with just a swift glance. He could tell that the two deceased Otherworldly Demons were Saint 3-dan experts!

With such strength, the duo could be considered experts even

among the Qingtian royalty.

Hu!

With a thought, the Violetleaf King appeared before Zhang Xuan.

"Do you recognize these two fellows?" Zhang Xuan asked gravely.

Based on previous experiences, it was apparent that the Qingtian royalty had set their eyes upon the ancient domain as well. Thus, it was safe to assume that any Otherworldly Demons that appeared were related to the Qingtian royalty.

The Violetleaf King examined the two carcasses in front of him for a brief moment before turning to Zhang Xuan to report. "Reporting to Young Master, I don't know those two. However... judging from their features, they are most likely the subordinates of the Stoneleaf King!"

"Stoneleaf King?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

That was the Otherworldly Demon King who was ranked fourth of the Five Upper Kings!

"The Stoneleaf King is known for his superior physical body. When his cultivation technique is active, his entire body will gain toughness comparable to the strongest granite in the world, granting him foolproof defense! Considering how the skin of these two Otherworldly Demons is dry and rough, it appears that they have practiced a similar cultivation technique to that of the Stoneleaf King, so it is very likely that they are his subordinates," the Violetleaf King analyzed.

Zhang Xuan nodded.

Back when he examined the duo with the Eye of Insight, he did notice that their skin was a little cracked and grayish, reminiscent of a stone. He had thought that it might have been a result of the poor environment they had grown up in, resulting in the aged appearance of their skin. However, judging from the Violetleaf King's words, it appeared that it was the result of the practicing of

some kind of unique cultivation technique.

After understanding what was going on, the Violetleaf King remarked, "The Stoneleaf King is a Saint 4-dan pinnacle expert, and he boasts indomitable physical prowess. Even I dare not stand up against him as an enemy. I fear that it will be extremely dangerous for Wu shi and the others to face him!"

Zhang Xuan couldn't help but feel a little apprehensive at those words. Not daring to waste any time, he hurriedly followed the trail forward.

Hong long long!

Proceeding forward for a while longer, a rumble abruptly sounded from the front. Gazing ahead, Zhang Xuan saw that the area in front of him was filled with dark, ominous clouds. Innumerable streaks of lightning flashed furiously across the area, and the deafening rumbling of thunder roared ceaselessly in the air.

The Spatial Formation they were in had conditions that deeply resembled those of the external world. There were varying seasons and weather conditions, and naturally, there was spring lightning as well.

Seeing that the trail led into the field of lightning, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but frown. They are in there...

The spring lightning before him was extremely fearsome; just a brief moment of carelessness could easily result in one being struck to death. Under normal circumstances, he would surely have fled as far away as possible, not daring to get close at all.

Yet, the expedition team had actually dared to step into such treacherous lands. It seemed like the danger they were facing was far greater than he had imagined.

I really should have left the Golden Origin Cauldron with them, Zhang Xuan thought in self-reproach.



He thought that the only danger that the crowd would face in the Unbounded Formation was from the sound of the breeze, so he didn't bother leaving the Golden Origin Cauldron behind to protect them. Yet, who would have thought that they would end up encountering Otherworldly Demons?

"Young Master, the lightning is very dangerous. Are you really intending to enter?" The Violetleaf King couldn't help but cower at the field of lightning.

"You should enter the Myriad Anthive Nest for the time being!" Knowing that an additional member would just mean an additional target for the lightning to strike, Zhang Xuan had the Violetleaf King return to the Myriad Anthive Nest. Just as he was about to step into the field of lightning, a thought surfaced in his mind, and he halted.

He quickly searched for a discreet area where he could hide at and sat down cross-legged. After ensuring that there was no one in the vicinity, he drew his soul out from his glabella.

If the expedition team was truly being pursued by the Otherworldly Demons, he had to get to them quickly to save them. If he attempted to enter with his physical body, there was a good chance that the lightning could be drawn to him, resulting in his advancement being slowed significantly. Thus, it would be much safer and faster to head in with his soul.

His soul was intangible and possessed no attribute, so as long as he didn't intentionally show himself, the lightning wouldn't be able to notice him.

Zhang Xuan swiftly stowed his physical body into the Myriad Anthive Nest as well before placing it into his storage ring. After which, holding onto the storage ring with his soul energy, he dived into the field of lightning. Tracing the trail on the ground with his Eye of Insight, he swiftly proceeded forward.

The trail had mostly been erased by the force of the lightning,

making it impossible for even a 7-star high-tier master teacher like Wu shi to trace it. It was only due to Zhang Xuan's extraordinarily sharp eyes that he was still able to follow it.

After flying for a while, Zhang Xuan felt a disturbance in the spiritual energy ahead of him. The lightning streaks seemed to concentrate right ahead, and amid their thunderous roars, he could barely make out the din of combat.

Rushing forward, Zhang Xuan soon found an extremely ancient city at the very center of the lightning. Within the city, the lightning seemed to have weakened considerably.

Two groups were currently clashing with one another intensely within the ancient city. Wu shi and the others were seated cross-legged on the ground, their faces pale from the injuries they had sustained. On the other hand, there were eight ferocious-looking Otherworldly Demons surrounding them.

"Violeat King, is the Stoneleaf King among the group there?"

For Wu shi and the others to be left in such a state, their opponent was definitely no pushover. Knowing that he couldn't act recklessly at such a moment, Zhang Xuan hurriedly communicated with the Violeat King in the Myriad Anthive Nest in hopes of obtaining more intelligence regarding the enemy forces.

After taking a look, the Violeat King replied telepathically, "Young Master, the Stoneleaf King isn't among the group. The eight Otherworldly Demons over there are likely his subordinates. Even so, they boast superior defense and are unafraid of death, making them fearsome adversaries."

"The Stoneleaf King isn't there?"

Hearing that the Stoneleaf King wasn't amid the group, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. He quickly slipped his soul back into the Myriad Anthive Nest and returned back to his body before

silently reappearing on the spot.

He was the only reinforcement the expedition team had at the moment. If he wanted to save them, he would have to defeat all of the Otherworldly Demons in a single sweep. Otherwise, if the enemy were allowed time to regroup and encircle them once more, he could very well be placed in a very dangerous position.

Zhang Xuan summoned the Golden Origin Cauldron out and instructed it grimly, "Ding Ding, you will be attacking with me in a moment."

"Young Master, rest assured. I will reduce that bunch to cinders!" the Golden Origin Cauldron declared confidently.

It had always loved fighting, but it was a pity that it didn't have many opportunities to do so. This was a rare chance for it to go all out, so how could it let such an opportunity slip through its fingers?

"Alright. Move!"

Identifying the best possible timing to strike, Zhang Xuan commanded the Golden Origin Cauldron before dashing forward.

Executing the Heaven's Path Movement Art, he charged right up furiously and rammed forcefully into an Otherworldly Demon.

His physical body was currently on par with Saint low-tier artifacts. The sheer force he harnessed in his ram was far greater than the might of any weapon that he could wield.

Peng!

The Otherworldly Demon that he struck was immediately killed on the spot. Just as Zhang Xuan was about to turn around and launch an attack toward the next enemy, he suddenly heard cries of agony behind him.

**\*\*Ahhhh!\*\***

Turning around, he saw that the Golden Origin Cauldron, with

its size enlarged to its maximum, had fallen down upon the remaining seven Otherworldly Demons, crushing them into meat paste.

Even in the moment before their deaths, the seven Otherworldly Demons had dazed looks on their faces, not knowing what was happening at all.

That is too savage.

Stunned, Zhang Xuan didn't even notice that his mouth was wide open.

He had thought that it was already very formidable that he could ram an Otherworldly Demon to death with his body, but who could have known that Golden Origin Cauldron would top his feat? It was as if what he had done was nothing more than child's play.

# Chapter 1044: Ancient Sage Qiu Wu

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Several minutes earlier...

Seated on the floor, the pale-faced Wu shi said, "I never thought that I, Wu Rufeng, would end up dying under the encirclement of a bunch of Saint 3-dan Otherworldly Demons."

In this moment, his confident eyes were filled with nothing but despondence.

Shortly after the demonic tune was finally dispelled, they encountered this bunch of Otherworldly Demons.

Under the torture of the demonic tunes, their expedition team had been severely depleted of their zhenqi and stamina, such that even walking was difficult for them. In their current state, there was no way they could withstand the ferocious assault of the Otherworldly Demons.

They had been left with no choice but to try their best to flee while fending off the Otherworldly Demon. Through pushing himself to his limit, Wu shi had managed to slay two of the Otherworldly Demons, but in the end, he had ended up being severely wounded by a Saint 4-dan Otherworldly Demon shortly after.

Even though they had already prepared themselves to face death in the exploration of the ancient domain, they hadn't even met the shadows of Zhang Yinqiu and the others yet! How could he die when he hadn't even managed to accomplish anything yet? More importantly, as a 7-star high-tier master teacher, he felt like it was a great humiliation to die at the hands of the Otherworldly Demons.

"If we really can't hold on any further, let's just explode our cultivation. I don't want to die and have my corpse tarnished in their hands!"

If his corpse were to be used by the Otherworldly Demons as a tribute for them to gain even more power, there was no way he would be able to rest in peace.

Instead of being humiliated in such a manner, he would rather implode himself, and perhaps, he might be able to bring some enemies down with him, bringing some value to his death.

With gritted teeth, the rest of the crowd nodded in agreement. "Very well!"

The ones present in the area came from various walks in life—master teachers, combat masters, and formation masters. However, they shared a common trait; they were all humans.

"Farewell, my friends and family. Farewell, the Master Teacher Pavilion. Farewell, mankind. I apologize for being unable to accomplish my mission."

Sighing deeply, the crowd was just about to give up their struggles and explode their cultivation when they suddenly saw a figure heading toward them.

"Principal Zhang?"

Upon seeing the other party's appearance, everyone couldn't help but clench their fists tightly, and their faces reddened in agitation.

They had thought that they were doomed, but who would have thought that Principal Chang would arrive at the very last moment?

Without utilizing any techniques, Zhang Xuan charged right into the fray. With just a single ram, he had already knocked an Otherworldly Demon into meat paste. The Golden Origin Cauldron was even more formidable. It expanded until it was several dozen meters wide and plummeted down upon the Otherworldly Demons from the sky, smashing seven of them in a single breath.

The Saint intermediate-tier Golden Origin Cauldron wielded fighting prowess on par with a Saint 4-dan pinnacle cultivator, and

the Otherworldly Demons surrounding them were merely at Saint 3-dan. There was no way they could possibly withstand its strength.

"Don't kill them fir..." Zhang Xuan tried to stop the Golden Origin Cauldron, but before he could finish his words, he realized that the group of Otherworldly Demons were already all dead. Thus, the rest of the words ended up being choked in his mouth, unable to be spoken.

He had been planning on keeping one of them alive for interrogation, but who could have known that the Golden Origin Cauldron would move so quickly? Barely after he had defeated his first one, the other party had already ended the remaining ones, not allowing him any time to stop it at all.

"Forget it..." Zhang Xuan shook his head before walking up to the expedition team. "How are you all feeling?"

With his eye of discernment, he could tell that their injuries were rather significant. It would take quite a bit of effort to heal them.

"Thank you for saving our lives..."

After expressing their gratitude to Zhang Xuan, the members of the expedition team hurriedly took out recovery pills from their storage rings and swallowed them.

The injuries they had sustained were so severe that they could only afford to utter a word of thanks before rushing off to recuperate.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan knew that they had their own recovery means, so he chose not to interfere too much either. Gazing at the crowd from his position, his frown couldn't help but gradually deepen with impatience.

Wu shi was the first one to recover to a decent extent from his injuries, and he slowly opened his eyes.

It was due to them being assaulted by the Otherworldly Demons

while they were in a deeply weakened state that they had fallen so easily.

Had the expedition team been at its full strength, they would have been able to deal with the enemy easily even if there were two Saint 4-dan experts on the other side.

"What happened?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"It's like this. Not too long after Principal Zhang left, we were encircled by the Otherworldly Demon..." Wu shi began going through the situation back then in detail.

After learning of the ins and outs of the situation, Zhang Xuan realized that the Otherworldly Demons who had left the expedition team fleeing frantically weren't as scary as he had imagined, and he heaved a sigh of relief. At the same time, he couldn't help but ask, "Where is Luo shi? Why isn't she with you?"

Zhang Xuan had been looking out for her ever since he arrived, but it was apparent that Luo Ruoxin wasn't among the expedition team. That was also the reason he was feeling deeply worried.

"As soon as the demonic tune vanished, Luo shi seemed to have noticed something, so she left the expedition team to take a look. As for exactly where she went, we aren't too sure either," Wu shi replied.

Luo Ruoxin had left right after the demonic tune vanished, and just barely two minutes after her disappearance, the Otherworldly Demons had suddenly come to attack. If she had been around, perhaps the expedition team wouldn't have faced such a crushing defeat.

"You aren't too sure either?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

She couldn't have encountered Otherworldly Demons in the midst of her journey either, could she? Even the entire expedition team had nearly been wiped out from facing them, so how could she possibly withstand their prowess alone?



"Wait a moment. You said that a Saint 4-dan Otherworldly Demon attacked you earlier, where is that fellow now?"

Earlier, Wu shi had mentioned that there was a powerful Otherworldly Demon that had severely wounded him earlier. Otherwise, with the powerful Wu shi holding the fort, they wouldn't have lost so tragically. If Zhang Xuan's guess wasn't off, that Saint 4-dan Otherworldly Demon should have been the Stoneleaf King. But... why wasn't he here at the moment?

Could it be that he had found the whereabouts of Luo Ruoxin and gone off to pursue her?

This time, it was Guild Leader Han who replied. "Shortly after entering this ancient city, he gave his subordinates some instructions and left the area hurriedly. It seemed like he was going to find some kind of treasure hidden within the field of lightning urgently."

After a moment of recuperation, Guild Leader Han had recovered a fair bit as well. While the wounds he was carrying at the moment were still rather severe, he was out of danger for the time being.

He left to find some kind of treasure? Anything is fine as long as he's not going after Luo Ruoxin. Heaving a sigh of relief, Zhang Xuan turned to the Golden Origin Cauldron and instructed, "Ding Ding, stay here to protect the others. I am going to look for Luo shi first."

No matter what the Stoneleaf King was up to, Zhang Xuan's priorities were clear. There was nothing more important than Luo Ruoxin's safety to him.

After leaving the expedition team, Zhang Xuan swiftly left the field of lightning in his soul form and searched around the area. Not too long later, he managed to find a trail.

Following the trail, he eventually found a young lady standing before a shattered stone tablet with a contemplative frown etched

on her forehead.

Zhang Xuan hurried forward to ask, "Are you fine?"

Upon seeing him, Luo Ruoxin chuckled and replied, "I am fine. What's wrong? Did something happen?"

"Wu shi and the others met with some trouble..." Zhang Xuan quickly filled Luo Ruoxin in on the happenings in her absence.

"They came under the attack of the Otherworldly Demons?" Luo Ruoxin harrumphed coldly. "Those scoundrels! They must have followed us in."

As the seal outside had been broken, the door could no longer keep anyone out. The Otherworldly Demons had probably gotten into the ancient domain by following them discreetly.

Zhang Xuan nodded as well.

Luo Ruoxin pointed at the rubble in front of her and asked, "Are you the one who destroyed the stone tablet?"

"This..." Zhang Xuan was slightly embarrassed.

While he hadn't destroyed the stone tablet with his own hands, its destruction could be attributed very directly to him. It wouldn't be too far-fetched to say that he was the culprit even.

"There is something weird with the stone tablet. Did you realize that it is made of the same material as the inscribed cliff face on the Saint Ascension Platform? Furthermore, this Spatial Formation deeply resembles the folded space that Kong shi left his scroll in back then," Luo Ruoxin said contemplatively.

"This..." Zhang Xuan was stunned.

Now that the other party mentioned it, he realized that there was indeed a deep resemblance between the two.

Similar materials being used could be attributed to the close proximity between the Saint Ascension Platform to this ancient domain. The cliff face was indeed a material that boasted a greater

longevity compared to the others, so it wasn't too surprising for the master of the ancient domain to select it. But the resemblance between both spaces was too much to pass off as a mere coincidence.

Could this ancient domain... really be related to Kong shi? Zhang Xuan thought.

There were quite a few people who had deduced that there might be a connection between the two since they were rather close with one another, but due to the silent restraint on the discussion of Kong shi's affairs, they dared not talk too much about it.

"No, that's not it... I was the one who activated the stone tablet, and the elder who appeared wasn't Kong shi..." Zhang Xuan said.

The elder who appeared earlier had claimed that he was the master of the ancient domain, but his appearance and gestures were completely different to Kong shi's!

Hearing that it was Zhang Xuan who had activated the stone tablet, Luo Ruoxin hurriedly turned her gaze over. "What was that elder's name?"

"His name? He didn't tell me... However, he did impart a movement technique to me that goes by the name of... Unbounded Voyager!" Zhang Xuan replied.

"Unbounded Voyager? Could it be..." Luo Ruoxin's eyes lit up as a thought came to her mind.

Noting Luo Ruoxin's reaction, Zhang Xuan asked, "You have heard of that movement technique before?"

"If the movement technique you have been given is truly Unbounded Voyager, then the person you met was most likely Ancient Sage Qiu Wu!" Luo Ruoxin replied.

"Ancient Sage Qiu Wu?" Zhang Xuan frowned. "I think I have heard of that name before... Wait! He is the expert who created the seal in the Subterranean Gallery beneath the Hongyuan Master

Teacher Academy!"

Back then, to repair the seal, Zhang Xuan had compiled a book on the seal, and from it, he had learned that it had been created by an expert who went by the name of Qiu Wu.

Could it be that... the elder who intended to accept him as his student was a fragmented soul of that expert?

Zhang Xuan couldn't help but shudder at the notion, and cold sweat broke out all over his body.

An expert that was able of creating a seal that even 9-star master teachers were incapable of breaking open... And he actually tried to take the other party in as his student...

How could he have been so brazen?

It was fortunate that the elder hadn't gotten angry over the matter, or else, even as a fragmented soul, the other party would still have been more than capable of destroying him.

"Un. Ancient Sage Qiu Wu possesses a deep understanding regarding the laws of space. Most of the seals to the otherworldly battlefields were set up by him!" Luo Ruoxin nodded.

"While Ancient Sage Qiu Wu wasn't Kong shi's student, he was one of Kong shi's staunch followers. Possessing an unfathomable cultivation, he stood beside Kong shi no matter where the latter went. On the surface, it might have seemed as if their relationship was that between a master and a servant, but in truth, they were close like brothers. Even the 72 Sages who inherited Kong shi's heritage had to respectfully address him as Senior Uncle Qiu Wu 1!"

"Senior Uncle Qiu Wu?"

"Indeed. Qiu Wu has devoted his life to following Kong shi, and back then, in order to fend off the offense of the Otherworldly Demons, he used his own body as the catalyst for a seal so as to stop the enemy in their tracks, thus buying precious time for the

human race. Among the respected predecessors of the Master Teacher Pavilion, his contribution is definitely ranked within the top five!"

Admiration and respect couldn't help but surface in Luo Ruoxin's eyes as she spoke of Qiu Wu. "That is the reason many of the later generations respected him deeply. Putting everything aside, just Pavilion Master Gou of the Qingyuan Conferred Empire Master Teacher Pavilion is one of his most fervent fans... Zhang shi, what's wrong?"

At this point, Luo Ruoxin turned her gaze over and noticed that, at some point in time, Zhang Xuan had collapsed weakly to the ground with a look of despair on his face. It was as if someone had slapped him hard on his face, and he looked so vexed that he was about to cry.

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# Chapter 1045: Soul Tempering Through Lightning

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"It's fine..."

Zhang Xuan struggled to his feet, but his entire body still felt limp and weak.

He had actually tried to make an expert like Ancient Sage Qiu Wu acknowledge him as his teacher. It was fortunate that no one else knew, or else Wu Shi and the others might just have pummeled him to death!

"Just a moment ago, I sensed a powerful fragmented soul that harnessed an ancient aura in the area, so I hurriedly left the expedition team to rush over. However, it abruptly vanished before I could reach here. It turns out that it was Ancient Sage Qiu Wu. Have you mastered his Unbounded Voyager yet?" Luo Ruoxin asked.

"I haven't learned it yet..." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"You haven't learned it? Well, I have read some records regarding the Unbounded Voyager, and it appears that the movement technique is highly demanding on one's physical body and zhenqi. It is not something that can be mastered easily, so there's no need for you to rush into it." Noting the crestfallen look on Zhang Xuan's face, Luo Ruoxin thought that he was feeling down because he hadn't managed to master it, so she attempted to console him.

"Un." Knowing that there was no way he could explain the matter either, Zhang Xuan nodded with a bitter smile.

Luo Ruoxin continued. "The Unbounded Voyager can definitely be ranked within the top three movement techniques on the Master Teacher Continent, so you must take caution when using it publicly. Otherwise, if others were to notice it, you might end up bringing trouble upon yourself."

While master teachers were bound by rules, sometimes, in face of an unparalleled treasure, greed could become a sufficiently powerful force for them to cast aside their morals.

Using the current Zhang Xuan as an example, it was not that there wasn't anyone who was tempted to obtain his cultivation technique and battle techniques, considering the incredible fighting prowess he wielded. The only reason no one had done so thus far was due to their fear of 'Yang shi' and the Master Teacher Pavilion!

Had it not been for 'Yang shi's' occasional appearances reminding everyone that he had the backing of a fearsomely powerful teacher, he could have already been taken down long ago and forced to spill all of the secrets he had.

Such was the case for the Unbounded Voyager, too.

Not only was it powerful, it was also a part of the legendary Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's heritage. Once news that Zhang Xuan was in possession of it spread... perhaps master teachers might still hold themselves back, in consideration of their standing, but the same couldn't be said about the other unaffiliated cultivators or those from other occupations. It was for this very reason that Zhang Xuan had been so fixated on the idea of maintaining a low profile.

As the old adage goes, better safe than sorry.

"Thank you for your reminder, I will take note of it!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Un. Since Ancient Sage Qiu Wu has appeared once, it is very likely that we will have many more opportunities to meet him later on. For the time being, let's hurry back to where Wu shi and the others are. If the Stoneleaf King you spoke of goes back to them, they will be in grave danger," Luo Ruoxin said.

"Yes, you're right. We will still have plenty of chances to meet

him in the future. Alright, let's go!"

Zhang Xuan was still feeling deeply guilty over the words that he had spoken. Upon hearing that Ancient Sage Qiu Wu would very likely appear again in the future, he heaved a sigh of relief.

Indeed, the elder whose dissipation he had induced was just a fragmented soul. They were bound to meet more as they travel through the ancient domain. At the very most, he would just have to apologize to him later on.

The urgent matter at hand wasn't for him to be conflicted over such trivialities but to advance deeper into the ancient domain, find the old principal, and foil the plans of the Otherworldly Demons. He would only be truly letting down Ancient Sage Qiu Wu if he allowed the Otherworldly Demons' ploys in the ancient domain to succeed.

Without any hesitation, the duo began heading toward the field of lightning.

Hong long long!

Before they could even come close to the field of lightning, they could already hear the domineering thunder roaring in the distance, as if some kind of powerful force was trying to rip the world into two.

Soon, arriving before the field of lightning, Zhang Xuan's eyes narrowed.

The field of lightning had been plenty frightening when he first arrived as well, but the sight before him at that moment was a true catastrophe.

To make a comparison, the field of lightning had intensified from a drizzle into a heavy downpour.

Countless streaks of lightning assaulted the land relentlessly with frightening concentration, turning the ground pitch black. It was as if someone had carried out an entire stretch of hell and shifted it



here, leaving others to keep a distance away from it fearfully.

What happened? Why did the lightning suddenly run amok? Zhang Xuan was deeply anxious and worried.

Wu shi and the others hadn't recovered from their injuries yet! In face of such a powerful lightning storm, they could very well be in danger!

Just what could have happened for the relatively calmer field of lightning to abruptly go berserk?

"How do we enter?" Zhang Xuan frowned in vexation.

When the lightning had been sparser, he had still been able to evade them easily using his soul. But with the lightning becoming so frighteningly concentrated, drowning the entire area, no matter how fast his reaction speed was, there was no way he could avoid every single one of the lightning! He would be reduced to cinders before he could even get in!

"The lightning is far too concentrated; it won't be feasible for us to charge in forcefully." Luo Ruoxin's eyebrows were also knitted together.

She was also unable to think of a workable solution to get into the field of lightning at the moment.

Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before turning to Luo Ruoxin and saying, "You should enter the Myriad Anthive Nest for the moment. I will try to think of a way to get through the field of lightning."

She had been with him when the Myriad Anthive Queen consumed the folded space at the Saint Ascension Platform, so it was no secret to her.

After slight hesitation, Luo Ruoxin nodded. "Alright then. You have to be careful."

"Un."

After having Luo Ruoxin enter the Myriad Anthive Nest, Zhang Xuan attempted the same ploy he had utilized before. He drew his soul out from his body and charged in.

Before such violent lightning, it wouldn't take long for even his Saint low-tier physical body to be reduced to a lump of meat. It would be far safer for him to enter in his soul form.

Due to the intangible nature of souls, it could ward off most of the energy from the lightning, thus minimizing the danger that one would face from it.

Hong long!

As soon as Zhang Xuan entered, several bolts of lightning immediately fell from the sky and struck his soul squarely. In an instant, his soul stiffened entirely, and a piercing pain threatened to tear him apart.

"Yowch..." Zhang Xuan gritted his teeth forcefully to endure the excruciating pain his soul was put under.

It was fortunate that he cultivated the Heaven's Path Soul Art, so his soul was devoid of the yin attribute. Otherwise, considering the vulnerability of the yin attribute to lightning, his soul might have just dissipated then and there.

Nevertheless, as if he had been sentenced to death by a thousand cuts <sup>1</sup>, he felt like innumerable steel needles were piercing into his soul. The sheer pain he was put under pushed his mind to its very limit, and he felt as if he could faint on the spot.

At this rate, I think that I will die of pain before I can persevere up to where Wu shi and the others are, Zhang Xuan thought grimly.

He had strong mental resilience, granting him great tolerance to pain. Nevertheless, the excruciating pain from the lightning striking down on him relentlessly still left him feeling as if he would faint at any moment.

He was still a distance away from the ancient city where Wu shi and the others were. He really couldn't imagine himself moving his soul over under such circumstances.

I don't have a choice at the moment. I will have to deal with the pain no matter how unbearable it is. If I am already in such a state despite my soul form, Wu shi and the others must be in an even worse position than I am.] Zhang Xuan clenched his jaws tightly.

Wu shi and the others were currently located at the very heart of the field of lightning, and there was no doubt that there were in grave danger at the moment. He had to save them as quickly as possible.

Thus, fueled by determination, he continued trudging forward.

Pilipala!

Despite the intangible nature of souls, the lightning that fell from the sky was simply too concentrated, making it impossible for him to avoid it altogether. He had advanced less than a hundred meters into the field of lightning thus far, but his soul had already been struck at least five hundred times by the lightning.

Gradually, Zhang Xuan found his mind withering away under the immense pain. Knowing that it was impossible for him to force a path ahead, he was just about to give up and leave for the time being to decide on another course of action when he suddenly noticed something, and his eyes widened in astonishment.

T-this...

Overwhelming agitation struck Zhang Xuan abruptly, causing even his soul to distort from the sheer intensity of his emotions.

The Innate Fetal Poison actually fears the Power of Lightning! It is being forced to congregate at one location, Zhang Xuan thought in shock as he looked inwardly at the current state of his soul.

That incomparably haughty Innate Fetal Poison, which had wreaked havoc in his soul previously, was currently gathered

together, seemingly apprehensive of the Power of Lightning that had gathered around his soul. It was shaking fearfully by the corner, not daring to move in the least.

The amalgamation of his soul essence with Wei Ruyan's had granted his soul properties reminiscent of the Poison Soul Constitution, and that had helped him to suppress the Innate Fetal Poison considerably, forcing the latter to lie low for the time being. However, he knew that this was only a temporary measure. Given sufficient time, the Innate Fetal Poison would still find an opportunity to strike back.

But... at this moment, the Innate Fetal Poison was so frightened by the Power of Lightning that it had withdrawn entirely from the other portions of his soul, congregating together in just one location. If that was the case... was it possible for him to use the Power of Lightning to destroy the Innate Fetal Poison once and for all?

If he were to succeed, he could permanently rid himself of the ticking time bomb within him, and long gone would be the days where he lived fearfully for his life!

Since you are frightened of lightning, let me absorb some more and give you a good treat!

With that thought in mind, Zhang Xuan forcefully suppressed the vertigo he was experiencing to calm his mind.

After which, he began to actively absorb the lightning that he had been trying so hard to ward off a moment ago.

Since I am able to absorb even the heat of the lava, the same should apply for lightning as well.

If the heat contained within the lava could be used to refine his soul, perhaps lightning could have the same effects as well...

Gathering his concentration, he opened up all of the acupoints throughout his body and began driving the Heaven's Path Soul Art.

Even though he still didn't possess the Half-Saint Heaven's Path Soul Art yet, the Transcendent Mortal 9-dan Heaven's Path Soul Art was still sufficient for him to utilize the surrounding lightning to refine his soul, making it even more condensed and heavier.

Tzzzzzzzzzzzz!

Drawn in by Zhang Xuan, the Power of Lightning gathered around his soul in the form of innumerable little lightning snakes.

It had only been a stabbing pain before, but at that moment, he felt as if someone had plunged his soul into a wok of boiling oil; there was not a single portion of his soul that wasn't hurting.

" Ahh! "

Feeling as if a devastating force was ripping through his body, Zhang Xuan let loose a deafening bellow.

If it had been anyone else, they would have long succumbed. However, as a practitioner of the Heaven's Path cultivation techniques, his physical body and soul carried the inviolable disposition of the heavens, granting him superior resilience to the forces of nature. On top of that, his transcendental state of mind also helped his mind to remain composed and rational before the immense pain, thus allowing him to forcefully retain his consciousness.

Geji! Geji!

Driving the little lightning snakes through the meridians of his soul via the Heaven's Path Soul Art, Zhang Xuan soon realized, to his delight, that despite the unbearable pain he was suffering, the Innate Fetal Poison had been forced to congregate closer and closer together, seemingly being backed into a corner, and the size of his soul was also compressed further as well.

With just a single circulation of the little lightning snakes, the height of his soul had been reduced from 8 meters to 7.9 meters.

Not only so, after absorbing the Power of Lightning, he realized

that his resistance to lightning had also been boosted significantly. The penetrating pain he felt seemed to feel a little less unbearable compared to before.

Continue!

Zhang Xuan knew that, if he couldn't withstand the lightning, it was very likely that he would pass out first before he could save Wu shi and the others. Thus, he decided to cultivate his soul first.

Hu hu hu!

The raging lightning continuously seeped into his soul, condensing his soul further and further.

It was still unbearable at the start, but as his soul absorbed the Power of Lightning and grew stronger, the excruciating pain caused by the lightning also began to dull.

Hong long!

After some time, with a furious roar, his soul advanced from Half-Saint to Nascent Saint, and its height also reduced from eight meters to seven meters.

Alright, I should head over to save Wu shi now!

Zhang Xuan knew that the lightning from the surroundings couldn't knock him out anymore, and he heaved a sigh of relief. He hurriedly got to his feet and flew into the distance.

He could still cultivate his soul further by tapping into the Power of Lightning, but the urgent matter at hand was to save Wu shi and the others. If he were to waste any more time, they could very well have lost their lives before he even arrived.

Fazed by the immense power of the lightning no longer, Zhang Xuan was able to travel extremely swiftly. Within just a few dozen breaths, he arrived at the area where he had met Wu shi and the others before. After a look at the area, he couldn't help but frown.

The entire area had been devastated by some kind of powerful

force, and Wu shi and the others, who had still been recuperating a moment ago, had vanished from sight.

Zhang Xuan's complexion darkened. Could it be that... the Stoneleaf King has returned for them?

# Chapter 1046: Lightning Elemental Orb

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Under normal circumstances, considering how concentrated the lightning was, it was impossible for Wu shi and the others to flee from the field of lightning. Yet, at this moment, they had vanished from sight. That could only mean one thing—the Stoneleaf King had returned, and he had assaulted the expedition team!

However, that thought only remained in Zhang Xuan's mind for a moment before being rejected.

Wait a moment... Ding Ding might be unreliable at times, but its fighting prowess is not one to be underestimated. As long as the opponent hasn't reached Saint 5-dan Leaving Aperture realm, it shouldn't be possible for the other party to defeat it. They should be fine under its protection!

Furthermore, I haven't been gone for too long. Even if Ding Ding is no match for the enemy, it should still be able to hold on for some time. Furthermore, considering the ridiculous concentration of the lightning falling around the area, no matter how formidable the Stoneleaf King may be, there's no way that he will be able to withstand it. It would be difficult for him to even protect himself at the moment, so how could he have the chance to harm Wu shi and the others?

The Golden Origin Cauldron was a Saint intermediate-tier artifact. Even though it was only capable of ramming itself into others without anyone controlling it, thus severely limiting its fighting prowess, it should have been more than capable of keeping the Stoneleaf King away from the others!

Not to mention, it would have been difficult for even the Stoneleaf King to survive the violent assault of lightning, let alone kill others.

"Hmm?"



Guessing that the Stoneleaf King hadn't returned yet, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief before turning his gaze back to the rubble.

Since Wu shi and the others hadn't come under the assault of the Otherworldly Demons, the chances would be that they were currently hiding.

Taking a closer look, Zhang Xuan soon realized that something was amiss, and he chuckled softly.

Beneath the rubble of the ancient city, the dirt on the ground was fresh. If his deduction was not off, it was likely that Wu shi and the others were hidden underground.

Due to the unique constitution of humans, they would likely have drawn lightning to them had they stood above ground. As such, it was much safer for them to hide underground. That was indeed a good move on their part.

Hu!

Taking his body out from his storage ring, Zhang Xuan returned his soul to his body, and with a blast of zhenqi, he knocked away the surrounding rubble and began burrowing into the ground.

As expected, shortly after he burrowed into the ground, the intensity of the lightning strikes weakened considerably. At a depth of around eight meters underground, he saw the top of massive cauldron beneath him.

The Golden Origin Cauldron had expanded to its maximum size of around thirty meters wide. There was no one outside the cauldron, which meant that everyone was likely hiding within it.

"You are injured?"

Zhang Xuan was just about to pry open the cauldron lid to see how the others were doing when he realized that the aura of the Golden Origin Cauldron was extremely weak. It seemed to have sustained severe injuries.

"Young Master, you are here..." Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, the Golden Origin Cauldron responded with a relieved but feeble voice. "They are all fine."

"What happened?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

"The lightning was too strong; the others weren't able to withstand it at all. I tried to save them, so I expanded my body to its maximum size to take the attacks in their stead. I feel very tired. I want to rest now," the Golden Origin Cauldron said weakly.

Seeing the Golden Origin cauldron in such a state, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but clench his fists tightly together.

To expand to over thirty meters wide in the face of such concentrated lightning, it was no wonder the Golden Origin Cauldron had ended up in such a state.

As a Saint intermediate-tier artifact, the lightning wouldn't deal too much damage to its body. However, the same could not be said about its spirit.

From the very start, souls and spirits were exceptionally weak against lightning.

While the Golden Origin Cauldron had managed to save the expedition team, its spirit had ended up being severely wounded by the relentless lightning strikes. As such, its consciousness was starting to fade.

"I will impart a cultivation technique to you right now, so try to cultivate it. You mustn't fall asleep at this point!" Knowing that the Golden Origin Cauldron's spirit could very well die were it to fall asleep at this moment, Zhang Xuan panicked. He hurriedly flicked his wrist and passed a cultivation technique manual over.

It was a method to temper one's soul. While he was unsure whether it was effective against spirits or not, he didn't have any better alternatives at that moment.

While the Golden Origin Cauldron was rather rowdy and

unreliable at times, there was no doubt about its loyalty. Not to mention, it had only landed itself in its current state due to his order to protect the others. He couldn't allow anything to happen to it!

"Alright... I will cultivate it when I have time... Young Master, I might fear death, but I am not coward..." The Golden Origin Cauldron's voice slowly trailed off, and eventually, it fell completely silent.

"Ding Ding!" Zhang Xuan shouted in alarm, but the other party had already fallen asleep.

From the very start, the Golden Origin Cauldron had already been at its limit. It had been forcing itself to hold on until Zhang Xuan arrived.

"You aren't a coward; you are a hero," Zhang Xuan muttered softly to the Golden Origin Cauldron as he gritted his teeth tightly together. "Don't worry, I will save you."

The Golden Origin Cauldron might only have been an artifact, a very cowardly one at that, but in the crucial moment, it had still leaped in without any hesitation, choosing to sacrifice itself to protect the others.

Zhang Xuan had already promised to raise its cultivation to Saint 5-dan Leaving Aperture realm. He couldn't just allow the Golden Origin Cauldron to remain in a coma like that. No matter what, he had to save it and fulfill its wish!

Staring at the Golden Origin Cauldron for a moment longer, Zhang Xuan sighed deeply, his voice tinged with helplessness, before he pried open the lid and entered it.

"Principal Zhang, you are back!"

Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, Wu shi and the others hurriedly got to their feet and greeted him.

Under the protection of the Golden Origin Cauldron, they had

been spared from the frenzied rampage of the lightning. On top of that, after recuperating from their injuries for some time, they had recovered considerably.

"Un. What happened? Why did the lightning suddenly run amok?" Zhang Xuan asked.

He had gone off to find Luo Ruoxin, so he wasn't too sure about the situation within the field of lightning. On the other hand, the expedition team had been at the center of the field of lightning when it all happened, so they would have a clearer understanding of the matter.

"It should be related to the Stoneleaf King that you spoke of. Perhaps, in the midst of searching for his treasure, he might have accidentally come into contact with something that resulted in the abrupt intensification of the lightning!" Wu shi deduced.

They had been discussing the matter a while ago, and this was the explanation that they found the most viable.

Otherwise, a field of lightning of such size couldn't possibly change all of a sudden, sending so many streaks of lightning down from above.

"That might very well be the case." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Indeed!

Previously, the Saint 4-dan Stoneleaf King had said that he was leaving to find some kind of artifact, but in the end, not too long after he had left, such a situation had occurred. There was bound to be a connection between the two matters.

"In which direction did the Stoneleaf King leave?" Zhang Xuan asked with narrowed eyes.

Had it not been for that fellow, the Golden Origin Cauldron wouldn't have fallen unconscious. No matter what, he had to exact vengeance!

Besides, regardless of what the artifact that the other party was seeking, it could only spell a calamity for them. Even at the cost of his life, he had to stop the other party!

Wu shi pointed and said, "He headed into the depths of the ancient city."

They were currently at the outskirts of the ancient city, and they had seen the Stoneleaf King heading toward the very center of the ancient city back then.

"I will head over there to take a look. You should all continue recuperating here for the moment," Zhang Xuan said with a wave of his hand.

Feng Xun stood up and said, "Principal Zhang, I will follow you. The Stoneleaf King is extremely strong; you won't be able to deal with him yourself. Also, I have a unique method that allows me to track down Otherworldly Demons."

He had only been unable to fight due to his zhenqi and stamina being sapped dry by the earlier demonic tune. During the battle with the Otherworldly Demons, Wu shi and Guild Leader Han had fought hard to protect the other expedition members, so he had not suffered severe injuries. Thus, after a moment of recuperation, he was already back to his peak state and ready to fight once more.

"Alright." Seeing that Feng Xun was in a good state, Zhang Xuan nodded.

Combat masters should charge bravely ahead without allowing their fear of death to get in their way. To ask them to cower in the face of an enemy was no different from challenging their faith.

Furthermore, even though Feng Xun had been badly pummeled in the battle against him, that was only due to the latter suppressing his cultivation. If the latter used the entirety of his Saint 3-dan pinnacle cultivation, there was a good chance that he could be a match for even the Stoneleaf King.

The ability of the combat masters to rival opponents stronger than them wasn't for show.

Not to mention, Feng Xun also possessed certain means to track down Otherworldly Demons.

While the Eye of Insight was also capable of tracking down the trail of Otherworldly Demons, the problem with that was that most of the traces of the trail had dissipated under the frenzied lightning strikes. Instead of struggling to find a nearly invisible trail, he might as well bring Feng Xun along instead. This would also be a good opportunity for him to see what means the combat masters possessed.

A few other combat masters and master teachers also expressed their interest to tag along as well, but Zhang Xuan turned all of them down.

Firstly, those combat masters and master teachers hadn't fully recovered yet, so they were unlikely to be much of a match for the Stoneleaf King in their current state. Secondly, they had to protect some of the weaker and more severely injured expedition members as well. Otherwise, if the Stoneleaf King were to find their hiding spot before the exploring party found him, the others would be powerless to stand against him.

To be safe, it was better to have Wu Shi and Guild Leader Han remain with the rest of the expedition team.

Knowing the concerns that Zhang Xuan had, the others eventually relented. They hurriedly turned their attention back to recuperating from their injuries and depletion so that they could return to their peak state as soon as possible.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan burrowed through the soil with Feng Xun and returned to the surface.

The rampage of the lightning had alleviated considerably in the time that he had spent underground. Even without resorting to his

means as a soul oracle, he would still be able to avoid the lightning easily and travel through the field of lightning safely. Heaving a sigh of relief, he began heading toward the center of the ancient city.

Proceeding in, the lightning seemed to grow sparser and sparser. It was as if the ancient city harnessed some kind of unique power that prevented the lightning storm from wreaking havoc within.

However, while the lightning had decreased, the Stoneleaf King had used some kind of means to conceal his trail entirely. Even while using the Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan found himself losing sight of the other party's trail.

"Let me take a look." Coming to a halt, Feng Xun flicked his wrist, and a unique artifact reminiscent of a compass appeared in his hand. He bit his finger and dripped a droplet of blood on the compass.

Weng!

The artifact whirred into action, and the needle on the compass pointed toward a certain direction.

"That way," Feng Xun said.

"What is this artifact? It is able to discern the route that the Otherworldly Demons have passed through?" Zhang Xuan asked in curiosity.

This was his first time seeing that artifact.

"This is the Undefined Mirror. It is particularly sensitive to fresh blood and killing intent. Due to the Zhenqi of Slaughter that the Otherworldly Demons cultivate, killing intent is bound to linger in areas where they have passed by. This Undefined Mirror serves to find the trail of killing intent, thus leading one to the Otherworldly Demon himself. Of course, the killing intent left behind by the Otherworldly Demons will eventually fade with time, so the effectiveness of the artifact will be very poor beyond the four-hour

mark," Feng Xun replied.

"Undefined Mirror?" Zhang Xuan nodded.

The main purpose behind the existence of the combat masters was to stand against the Otherworldly Demons. It seemed like the Undefined Mirror was specially crafted to track down fleeing Otherworldly Demons.

The duo hurried in the direction pointed out by the Undefined Mirror.

Every once in a while, Feng Xun would take out the Undefined Mirror to ascertain their current location once more. After repeating the process several times, the duo soon found themselves standing before an old and tattered residence that stood at the very heart of the ancient city.

"Be careful!" Knowing that the Stoneleaf King was very likely to be within the residence, the duo glanced at one another before flying into the residence discreetly.

The courtyard of the residence had been completely destroyed. A towering Otherworldly Demon was currently seated at the centermost seat. Zhenqi gushed frenziedly out of his raised hands, seemingly attempting to defend himself against some kind of power.

In front of him, there was a relatively large lake, and a deep blue sphere, which was around the size of a fist, revolved continuously.

The zhenqi exerted by the Otherworldly Demon was directed right at the sphere, seemingly attempting to suppress the power within it.

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# Chapter 1047: The Fearsome Stoneleaf King

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Hong long!

As powerful as the Otherworldly Demon was, the orb wasn't any weaker either. It revolved abruptly, seemingly trying to struggle free of the other party's control. In the next moment, a deep blue flash of light surged into the heavens, and an explosion reverberated shortly after as countless streaks of lightning raged in the surroundings.

It was as if the lightning all around them was controlled by the orb.

"The orb is controlling the lightning in the surroundings? Could it be... the Lightning Elemental Orb?" Feng Xun narrowed his eyes at the sight, and he anxiously sent a telepathic message to Zhang Xuan.

"Lightning Elemental Orb?" Hearing that name, Zhang Xuan frowned deeply.

Having read all of the books in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, he was rather well-versed with the names of various famous artifacts. However, he had never heard of the Lightning Elemental Orb before.

"It is a lightning attribute artifact. Just like how spirit stones harness spiritual energy, the Lightning Elemental Orb harnesses an immense amount of lightning energy. Once released, it could easily cause devastating damage, making it an extremely fearsome artifact," Feng Xun explained apprehensively. A moment later, a doubtful look surfaced on his face as he added, "But the Lightning Elemental Orb is only produced in areas where the Power of Lightning gathers in great amounts. In terms of rarity, it is probably even less commonly seen than a 9-star master teacher, making it an extremely elusive artifact. Why would it appear here?"

"That orb over there is that valuable?" Zhang Xuan was astonished.

He had never heard of the Lightning Elemental Orb before, so he didn't know how valuable it was, but he did know how elusive 9-star master teachers were. Even taking the entire Master Teacher Continent into account, it would be hard to find more than a handful of them.

For the Lightning Elemental Orb to be as rare as 9-star master teachers, it was really way too scarce!

"Putting aside the fact that it wields the Power of Lightning, more importantly, what makes it extremely valuable is the fact that it is the ideal medium to serve as the core of any lightning attribute formations!" Feng Xun said. "It wields a very similar function to a formation plate. Gaining possession of it is equivalent to taking control of a powerful formation, allowing one to call forth the great might harnessed within it anytime, anywhere!"

A thought suddenly flashed across Zhang Xuan's mind, and he asked in astonishment, "Wait... Does that mean that the field of lightning here is a formation too?"

"That must be the case. Despite the lack of a formation master controlling the formation, the field of lightning is still able to easily exert fearful might. Just by that in itself, we can verify that it is a grade-8 formation at the least. If the Stoneleaf King succeeds in taking control of the Lightning Elemental Orb, we will be placed in a very dangerous position. By then, even with Wu Shi and Guild Leader Han's might combined, we won't be able to stand a chance against him!" Feng Xun exclaimed with a pale face.

"This..." Zhang Xuan's body tensed up.

As one who had suffered the battering of the lightning, he knew very well how fearsome the formation was. Had it not been for his means as a soul oracle, he would not have been able to make his way through the field of lightning at all in the first place.

Furthermore, this was under the circumstances that the formation was still uncontrolled by anyone. Should the Stoneleaf King gain ownership of the formation and drive the Power of Lightning harnessed within it against them... there would be no one who could stand against him. They would all, most likely, lose their lives.

The sudden intensification of the lightning earlier must be a result of that fellow attempting to gain control of the Lightning Elemental Orb as well, thus causing a disturbance in the formation, Zhang Xuan thought grimly.

The Lightning Elemental Orb wielded the ability to control the massive lightning formation spread out across the area. Most likely, the Stoneleaf King's attempt to gain control over the orb must have triggered its retaliation, resulting in the concentrated streaks of lightning falling from the sky earlier, nearly causing the death of the expedition team.

If even just the instinctive retaliation of the Lightning Elemental Orb was that powerful, the might that one could potentially wield from gaining full control over it was truly unimaginable.

With an awful complexion, Zhang Xuan discreetly communicated with the Violetleaf King in the Myriad Anthive Nest and swiftly received a clear answer—the towering Otherworldly Demon in front of him was indeed a member of the Upper Five Kings, the fourth ranked Stoneleaf King!

It was no wonder the other party dared to touch and attempt to manipulate an artifact as powerful as the Lightning Elemental Orb!

"We must stop him regardless of the cost! Otherwise, it will become nigh impossible to deal with him," Feng Xun said with tightly-clenched fists.

He had witnessed the battle between Wu shi and the Stoneleaf King earlier, and the latter's strength was truly formidable, such that even he wouldn't be a match for the latter in his peak state. If

the Stoneleaf King were to successfully gain control of the Lightning Elemental Orb on top of that, they wouldn't stand a chance at all!

By then, their entire expedition team could very well end up being wiped out here.

"Indeed. He hasn't succeeded yet, so we might still have time to stop him." Understanding Feng Xun's worries, Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Un." Feng Xun nodded grimly. He was just about to propose a plan for them to act on when a warm blue glow abruptly burst forth from the Lightning Elemental Orb. The eye of the Stoneleaf King immediately lit up, and his hand swiftly reached forth to grab the orb.

Hula!

The orb began flying toward the Stoneleaf King's hands.

"There's no time, move!"

Seeing this sight, Feng Xun hurriedly flicked his wrist and whipped out a sword before disappearing in a flash. In the next moment, his sword was already right behind the Stoneleaf King's heart, seemingly going to impale the latter's chest.

In his view, the Stoneleaf King had already succeeded in taming the Lightning Elemental Orb. Once the orb fell into the other party's hands, the other party would wield endless Power of Lightning. At that time, they would be utterly doomed.

"Hold on for a moment..."

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan was shocked to see Feng Xun charging forward without even discussing a plan with him. He hurriedly shouted while rushing forward, prepared to back Feng Xun up should the situation turn awry.

While the Stoneleaf King gaining possession over the Lightning

Elemental Orb would put them at a greater disadvantage, it didn't necessarily mean that things were completely hopeless for them. As long as they were to remain patient, they would surely find an opening in the other party that they could exploit to achieve victory.

Even if it was to stop the Earthleaf King from gaining possession of the Lightning Elemental Orb, rushing forward without a concrete plan in mind was just plain recklessness, and it would only place them in a worse position.

Hong long!

Feng Xun wasn't a Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall for nothing. Having achieved Sword-Man Union, his blade was completely harmonized with his entire being. His sword pierced forward with astounding speed and might reminiscent of a falling comet, such that even a Saint 4-dan expert would not dare face his attack head-on.

"Hmm? You aren't dead yet?"

On the other hand, the Stoneleaf King, who was in the midst of taming the Lightning Elemental Orb, suddenly felt a powerful killing intent behind him. Swiftly turning around, he saw Feng Xun, and his eyebrows shot up as he sneered, "Imbeciles. You could have taken this opportunity to flee as far as you could, but you foolishly chose to challenge me head-on. Since you are so eager to seek death, I shall accede to your request!"

After saying those words, the Stoneleaf King didn't bother to dodge. His right hand continued grasping firmly onto the Lightning Elemental Orb to tame it while his left hand burst forward with astounding might.

Hong long!

With a powerful blast of zhenqi, the Stoneleaf King's left hand collided forcefully against Feng Xun's stab, and as if a metal

hammer crashing into a porcelain vase, Feng Xun's sword shattered into innumerable fragments.

Peng!

The remaining force struck Feng Xun squarely in his chest, sending him crashing heavily onto the ground as blood spewed wildly from his mouth.

There was simply too huge a gap in strength between the two of them. With just a single strike, Feng Xun was sent flying.

He's really strong! Zhang Xuan eyes narrowed in alarm.

He had encountered six of the Ten Great Kings, and most of them had ended up dying by his hand. Despite all of them being Saint 4-dan experts, there was a huge gap between them and the Stoneleaf King.

It was no wonder the Violetleaf King was so fearful of the Five Upper Kings, trembling non-stop upon hearing their names. They were indeed a force to be reckoned with.

However, regardless of how powerful the Stoneleaf King was, it was already too late for Zhang Xuan to back down at this point. He had no choice but to fight.

Wielding the Glacier Rain Sword in his hand, he flicked it in a beautiful arc before abruptly driving it forward with a powerful lunge.

It was similar to Feng Xun's attack, just that... his target was not the Stoneleaf King but the Lightning Elemental Orb in the latter's hand.

The most important matter at hand was to stop the other party from successfully taming the artifact. Considering the other party's superior physical resilience, it was unlikely that any attack directed toward the other party would work in the short-term. On the other hand, perhaps if he were to direct his attack toward the Lightning Elemental Orb at this moment, there could be a chance

that he would be able to catch the other party off guard and succeed.

Wuuuuuuuuuu!

Zhang Xuan had devoted the entirety of his strength into this single lunge, pushing his physical strength, zhenqi, and soul energy to their limits. The sheer might behind the lunge caused space itself to moan under the immense pressure, as if it would be torn apart from it

This was probably the strongest sword art he had ever executed. It was on par even with Feng Xun's previous attack.

"Humph, you think that such puny tricks will work against me?" Seeing through Zhang Xuan's intent, the Stoneleaf King narrowed his eyes menacingly.

Without moving much, he raised two fingers and flicked it lightly.

Peng!

A sharp pain assaulted Zhang Xuan's purlicue 1 , and the Glacier Rain Sword in his hand abruptly flew out of his grasp, stabbing into a wall not too far away. On the other hand, just like Feng Xun, Zhang Xuan was forcefully knocked to the ground.

It took a forceful push against the ground before he was able to regain his balance.

In that moment, grimness could be seen in his eyes.

The Stoneleaf King's strength was more fearsome than he had thought. He had already used his full strength, but he had been unable to withstand even a simple flick from the other party.

Instead of advancing toward the Stoneleaf King once more, Zhang Xuan retreated slightly as he hurriedly immersed his consciousness into the Library of Heaven's Path to check on the book compiled on the Stoneleaf King.

He had managed to force the other party to execute a battle technique in the clash earlier, thus allowing him to compile a book on the other party in the Library of Heaven's Path.

"The Stoneleaf King is one of the Upper Five Kings of the Qingtian Ten Great Kings, and he possesses a cultivation of Saint 4-dan pinnacle. He has a particularly powerful physical body that grants him superior defense... Flaws: No.1, there is a lack of zhenqi in his glabella whenever he drives his cultivation technique. No.2, due to his inability to circulate zhenqi through his armpit, the region is soft and vulnerable..."

Soon, Zhang Xuan finished reading through the entire book. However, instead of being delighted, his complexion turned even more awful.

The Library of Heaven's Path did list the Stoneleaf King's openings, but the glabella and the armpits... Those were the most well-guarded of all places, making it nigh impossible to breach their defenses! On top of that, he had to get into close quarters with the Stoneleaf King in order to attack those locations, but the other party could easily knock him back before he could even get within two zhang 2 of the other party. It was completely useless knowing those flaws!

Boom!

Suddenly, a loud explosion sounded. Following which, the Stoneleaf King raised his left palm and smacked it down.

A massive palm print that covered a region stretching over several dozen meters covered the area above him and Feng Xun. Before the palm print could even fall on them, the immense pressure it exerted had already made their breathing hasten. With just one look, it was apparent that the palm strike was not something they could withstand with their current strength.

"This is really bad!"



Zhang Xuan hurriedly executed the Heaven's Path Movement Art and dashed out.

Peng!

However, before he could get out of the area of the palm strike, an immense might struck his back forcefully, pushing him through eight walls consecutively before he finally came to a halt. Yet another mouthful of fresh blood spewed from his mouth.

Zhang Xuan struggled to his feet with a mix of shock and relief in his eyes.

It was fortunate that he had cultivated his physical body earlier, or else the palm strike could have landed a fatal blow on him.

Even though he had cultivated the Saint Ascension Decipher and had made significant advancements in his physical body cultivation and soul cultivation recently, he was still too far off from matching up to the strength of a true Saint 4-dan expert. Four realms of difference in cultivation was simply too huge of a gap to be bridged.

Where is Feng Xun? Zhang Xuan anxiously scanned his surroundings before seeing Feng Xun climbing out from some nearby rubble in an unkempt state.

The other party's face was pale, and the front of his clothes had been dyed crimson with blood.

Clearly, the other party had suffered far severer wounds than he had.

While Feng Xun's fighting prowess was above Zhang Xuan's, his ability to flee in desperate situations seemed to be slightly lacking. Unable to get away in time, he ended up suffering a huge proportion of the palm strike's might. Were it not for his superior physical body, zhenqi, and soul as a combat master, he could very well have died from the strike.

Even so, his entire body had become limp from the strike.

Multiple bones had shattered due to the powerful impact, rendering him incapable of movement.

"This is the end!"

While continuing to tame the Lightning Elemental Orb with his right hand, the Stoneleaf King's left palm struck once more.

His movements seemed light and flimsy, seemingly devoid of strength, but Zhang Xuan knew that should the palm strike land, Feng Xun would die without fail. Thus, he hurriedly charged toward Feng Xun in an attempt to save the latter.

Despite the previous conflict between the both of them, they were comrades working toward the same goal at the moment. He couldn't just watch the other party die before his eyes.

Huala!

Driving his Heaven's Path Movement Art to its very limits, he appeared before Feng Xun in the blink of an eye. He hurriedly grabbed the latter and attempted to flee from the spot, but in that moment, he realized that it was already too late. The Stoneleaf King's palm was already right above him.

Vicious! Zhang Xuan bellowed in his mind, and in the next moment, powerful killing intent abruptly burst forth from his body.

Even though Vicious' killing intent wasn't too effective on fellow Otherworldly Demons, it could still disrupt the other party's attack for a short moment, thus possibly winning them some time to flee.

As Zhang Xuan had expected, upon feeling the powerful killing intent emanated by the young man before him, the Stoneleaf King was stunned momentarily. His palm strike also hesitated for an instant.

Hu!

In the brief moment he had bought for himself, Zhang Xuan

successfully pulled Feng Xun out of the palm strike's area of attack.

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# Chapter 1048: He is a Celestial Master Teacher!

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Boom!

The ground trembled, and countless houses collapsed. A massive palm was abruptly imprinted into the ground, cloaking everything in the area with dust.

It was fortunate that Zhang Xuan had reacted swiftly and had Vicious attack in his stead. Otherwise, the both of them would have surely been reduced into meat paste from the sheer force of that strike.

"How could he be so powerful?" Looking at the devastating damage before his eyes, Feng Xun's eyes were filled with disbelief.

As the Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall, he could even an average Saint 4-dan master teacher easily. Yet, it was as if the Stoneleaf King before was an unshakeable mountain, an existence that towered far beyond them...

Could the other party have held back in the fight against Wu shi?

But that didn't make any sense? Why would the other party hold back against them?

"He must have succeeded in taming the Lightning Elemental Orb for his own use. It was through tapping into the power of the orb and the massive formation around us that he was able to wield such overwhelming might!" Feng Xun's eyes widened in horror.

After everything he had done to stop the Stoneleaf King from taming the Lightning Elemental Orb, his efforts ended up in vain.

It didn't seem like the other party had gained total control over the orb yet, but it should already be at around seventy percent, sufficient for him to tap into its power. With the augmentation from the might of the orb and formation, it was hard to say

whether even a Saint 5-dan expert would be able to stand against the current Stoneleaf King, let more them!

"Who are you?"

Feng Xun wasn't the only one who was shocked. The astonished Stoneleaf King also hurriedly turned to Zhang Xuan to reassess him carefully from head to toe.

The killing intent which the young man had emanated previously possessed a fearsome level of purity which was on par even to his own. For such pure killing intent to appear on a human brat... this was inconceivable!

"Go!"

With Feng Xun around, Zhang Xuan knew that it could lead to many complications if he were to speak too much about the matter here, so he quickly pulled Feng Xun away and fled.

The Stoneleaf King before him was simply far too much stronger than the Violetleaf King, Goldenleaf King, and the others. It was impossible for the both of them to stop the other party with their limited strength. Rather than to fight to their deaths here, it would be better for them to escape for the time being, regroup with the others, and find another opportunity to strike down the Stoneleaf King.

"Trying to flee? Do you honestly think that you can get away from me?" the Stoneleaf King harrumphed coldly as he raised his hand and abruptly closed it into a fist.

Huala!

In the next moment, several bursts of lightning gushed down from the heavens, forming a tight cage that sealed the duo within.

"We are trapped..." Zhang Xuan's heart turned cold.

Judging from the intensity of the lightning, if they were to attempt to charge out of the lightning cage forcefully, the chances

were that they would be reduced to ashes on the spot.

The other party had already gained the ability to control the Lightning Elemental Orb and the lightning formation. As long as they remained within the area of the formation, they would be unable to Stoneleaf King.

"Principal Zhang, our Combat Master Hall has a secret art that allows me to boost my speed by twofold for a short period of time. I will use it to buy some time for you later on, so make use of the opportunity to flee." After a moment of hesitation, Feng Xun got to his feet and said grimly.

"Boost your speed by twofold? Will you still have the strength to escape after the duration of your secret art ends?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

Secret arts that granted one massive boosts in physical capabilities often brought about devastating trauma to one's cultivation foundation and physical body. Even if one were to manage to kill one's enemy using the secret art, the chances were that one wouldn't live too long after that either.

Instead of replying to Zhang Xuan's question, Feng Xun chuckled softly and said, "Principal Zhang, to be honest, I have disliked you from the first time I met you. Your students have brought great dishonor to the Combat Master Hall, and I have been trying to find an opportunity to get even with you over that. It's a pity that I have yet to succeed.

"As much as I hate to admit it, the potential that you hold within you is far greater than mine. It is just a matter of time before you become a great asset to mankind! It is depressing to speak of this, but your life is worth more than mine!

"But it's fine. If my sacrifice can bring about to brighter future for humanity, I will gladly do it. Later on, I will open up a gap in the lightning cage, so make use of the opportunity to flee as far as you can... No matter what, you must survive this ordeal!"

"Flee?" Not expecting Feng Xun to be able to cast aside his differences in the crucial moment and work for the collective welfare for mankind, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but feel touched within. He nodded and replied, "Alright."

"Good. Let's begin then!" Seeing that Zhang Xuan had agreed to the plan, Feng Xun heaved a sigh of relief.

In the next moment, his aura abruptly surged.

Hong long!

His aura swiftly reached its peak, and just as he was about to activate his secret art, he suddenly felt a forceful blow at the back of his head. His vision before him abruptly darkened, and his body slumped weakly onto the ground, fainted.

"We won't be able to get away even if you were to use your secret art. Pardon me..." Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly.

Feng Xun's plan was probably the best plan they had at hand, but... it still wasn't good enough.

Even if the other party succeeded in intercepting the Stoneleaf King and bought sufficient time for him to escape, there was no way he could escape given the sheer size of the lightning formation. As long as he remained in the lightning formation, the Stoneleaf King would surely be able to hunt him down.

Furthermore, if he were to flee by himself, the next victims would be Wu shi and the others.

Given the current circumstances, fleeing was no longer an option anymore...

As Zhang Xuan and Feng Xun had been communicating with one another through zhenqi telepathy, the Stoneleaf King was unaware of the conversation between them. Thus, when he saw Zhang Xuan knocking Feng Xun out, he couldn't help but be bewildered by the abrupt turn in events.

"Stoneleaf King, it has been long since we last met. You asked who I was previously, right? Let me answer your question right now. It's me..."

After knocking Feng Xun out, Zhang Xuan raised his gaze towards the Stoneleaf King and chuckled softly. 'Geji, geji!', creaking sounds began echoing from his body as a token in front of his chest glowed brilliantly. As if his disguise had been released, he began to grow taller and bigger. A pure and condensed killing intent began drifting into the air, sending chills down the spines of others.

"Violetleaf King?" Upon catching sight of the other party's appearance, the Stoneleaf King was stunned for a moment.

"It's me." Zhang Xuan nodded.

It was hard to tell whether the Stoneleaf King was aware of the deaths of the other Otherworldly Demon Kings, so it wouldn't do to impersonate them. The Violetleaf King was still alive and was currently in his Myriad Anthive Nest, so impersonating as the Violetleaf King was the safest option at hand.

Besides, he also had the deepest understanding of the Violetleaf King, so it was easier for him to disguise as the latter as well.

"You and the Waterleaf King have been dispatched to carry out a mission, but we suddenly lost contact of you. What happened?" the Stoneleaf King asked with a darkened expression.

That fellow and the Waterleaf King had been tasked to find the map at the Poison Hall, but the Soulbound Token of the latter shattered all of the sudden. The Soulbound Token of that fellow remained intact, but communications from him abruptly halted. Everyone thought that he might have been taken hostage somewhere, but who could have thought that he would appear here out of the blue?

"Like you have seen, I have concealed my appearance to blend in



with the humans and earn their trust. If I were to be caught communicating with the rest of you, my efforts could have very well be undone..." Zhang Xuan replied.

"Blend in with the humans?" the Stoneleaf King frowned. He immediately extended his Spiritual Perception to cover the Violetleaf King.

Honestly speaking, it was suspicious that the Violetleaf King, who had gone missing for more than half a month now, would suddenly appear here. There was a need to look carefully into this matter.

Taking a close look, there wasn't the slightest problem with the Zhenqi of Slaughter in the other party's body. In other words, the person standing before him was indeed the Violetleaf King.

"Un. I happened to chance upon a huge secret of the humans. If it turns out to be true, it could spell annihilation for our kind... Thus, I dare not to act recklessly. To be absolutely certain, I decided to disguise myself as a human to mix in with the rest of them."

Zhang Xuan knew that the Stoneleaf King was secretly examining him with his Spiritual Perception, but he made no attempts to hide from it at all. Instead, with a deep, worried frown furrowed between his brows, he replied with a hushed voice.

"Annihilation for our kind?" Retracting his Spiritual Perception, the Stoneleaf King shook his head and said, "You must be joking! Even with the incredible strength that Kong shi wielded back then, he only succeeded in driving us out of the Master Teacher Continent! Just what could possibly happen that would result in an annihilation of our kind?"

On top of being the leader who had united mankind and founded the Master Teacher Pavilion, Kong shi possessed frightening strength as well. But while none of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was able to match him, they were eventually only driven out

of the Master Teacher Continent. As such, how could the learning of a mere secret determine whether their kind would be annihilated or not?

This was just fear mongering!

"I didn't believe it at the start either, but... I can swear on my life that it is the absolute truth!" Zhang Xuan said grimly.

No matter how well he disguised himself as the Violetleaf King, it was hard to ensure that he wouldn't be seen through by the Stoneleaf King. In the first place, it was already suspicious for him to appear in the ancient domain.

The best way to resolve this issue was to redirect the other party's attention to something else... If he could put out big news one after another, the other party would be too shocked to doubt his identity any longer.

"Truth? Can you prove it?" Noting the conviction in the Violetleaf King's voice, the Stoneleaf King asked with a frown.

To be honest, at this point, he still didn't believe that the person before him was the Violetleaf King. Nevertheless, this didn't hinder him from listening to the other party's news.

"Have you heard of Celestial Master Teacher?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"Celestial Master Teacher?" The Stoneleaf King was taken aback for a moment before his eyes narrowed in astonishment. "Of course I do! Kong shi was a Celestial Master Teacher himself. As one who has received the acknowledgement of the heavens, a Celestial Master Teacher is a truly indomitable existence. Could it be..."

"Indeed... I went to the Poison Hall to carry out my mission, but by a stroke of coincidence, I happened to find a Celestial Master Teacher. That's the reason why I suddenly changed my course of plans and disguised myself as a human to blend in with them!"

Zhang Xuan nodded.

"How could that be possible? According to our sources, Kong shi has been the only one in history to be conferred as a Celestial Master Teacher. There has been none after him who has achieved the same feat, not even his direct disciples, the 72 Sages... Where did you hear the news from?" The body of the Stoneleaf King stiffened. He couldn't believe his ears.

If a Celestial Master Teacher had really appeared amongst the humans, that would be truly a huge disaster for the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. If that individual were to be allowed to grow to become another Kong shi, they might really well meet with annihilation.

Back then, it was under Kong shi's leadership that the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe took a heavy blow and was forced out of the Master Teacher Continent. It took them several ten thousand years of rest before they managed to recover from the damage they had suffered then. If another Kong shi were to appear amongst the humans... They would truly be unable to make a comeback anymore!

While the past several ten thousand years of recuperation had allowed them to recover from the blow they had suffered back then, the mankind had also furthered its strength through the Master Teacher Pavilion, making them stronger than ever.

"There is no mistake with the news. Furthermore... I have been following behind the Celestial Master Teacher all along and intentionally lured him here..." Zhang Xuan said.

"Lured him here?" The Stoneleaf King glanced at the fainted Feng Xun as he asked doubtfully, "Are you saying that... he is the Celestial Master Teacher?"

"Indeed, that's him!" Zhang Xuan replied affirmatively.

"This..." the Stoneleaf King frowned, skeptical of Zhang Xuan's

words.

While that combat master possessed the ability to rival opponents with cultivation beyond his, he seemed to be a rather reckless person. This was unlike how Celestial Master Teachers were depicted in the legends.

"Why? You don't believe me?" Zhang Xuan burst into laughter before saying, "Our Otherworldly Demonic Tribe must have certain ways to verify the identity a Celestial Master Teacher. If you don't trust me, you can verify it yourself!"

"There are indeed methods to verify that one is Celestial Master Teacher..." The Stoneleaf King frowned. "However, it will be a little troublesome to do so..."

"This bit of trouble means nothing. What is more important is that we verify his identity. Once it is proven that he is a Celestial Master Teacher, we should find ways to bring him over to our side. With his strength, our Otherworldly Demonic Tribe will grow stronger and stronger. With the immense contribution we have made, we will surely go down in history as meritorious subjects!" Zhang Xuan persuaded.

"You're right..." The Stoneleaf King nodded. He hesitated for a moment longer before eventually nodding, "To test for the identity of a Celestial Master Teacher, we will require the help of the Windleaf King. He's the only one who wields such capability. Once he comes over, we will be able to verify whether the man you spoke of is truly a Celestial Master Teacher or not!"

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# Chapter 1049: An Alliance of Blood

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"The Windleaf King?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

That was the third strongest expert of the Five Upper Kings! Who could have thought that such a powerful figure would be here as well?

Just a Stoneleaf King had nearly caused their entire team to be wiped out. How was he supposed to deal with the even stronger Windleaf King?

However, given his current identity as the Violetleaf King, there was no way he could turn down the request. Besides, since the other party was in the ancient domain as well, it was only a matter of time before they encountered one another. If he could meet the other party in advance, perhaps he could gather some intelligence and formulate a plan to deal with the other party.

"He's in the vicinity. I will call him here right now..."

Flicking his wrist, the Stoneleaf King whipped out a Communication Jade Token and casually wrote a few words on it, sending a message over. After that was done, he suddenly turned his gaze back towards Zhang Xuan with a doubtful expression. "If this human is really a Celestial Master Teacher, how could he appear here? Not to mention, how could you have possibly managed to uncover his identity?"

Clearly, the Stoneleaf King was still a little iffy the claims made by the fellow before him.

It was also no surprise that he would be feeling so skeptical about the matter. The Violetleaf King had disappeared an entire half a month before abruptly vanishing. On top of that, the other party had made a move against him while the other party was disguised as a human... There were far too many doubtful points regarding the issue.

Not to mention, there had only been a single Celestial Master Teacher in the world so far, and many millenniums had passed without anyone reaching the same height. If another Celestial Master Teacher were to appear, the Master Teacher Pavilion would surely place that person under the tightest of protection. It was inconceivable that the Violetleaf King was able to uncover a Celestial Master Teacher that easily and even lure the other party into a dangerous place like this.

"Now that I think of it, it's truly a huge coincidence. The Celestial Master Teacher didn't come from any Sage Clan or the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarter. Instead, he originated from a measly Unranked Kingdom, slowly making his way up through the ranks..."

Without any hint of embarrassment, Zhang Xuan smiled lightly and said. "In order to avoid unneeded trouble, he has been concealing his identity all along. In other words, not even the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarter is aware of the appearance of that person. It's only through a series of coincidences that I found out about his identity. Back when I was looking into the whereabouts of the Poison Hall in Jingyuan City, I saw him undergoing the acknowledgement by the heavens, and it was only through that that I was able to ascertain his identity as a Celestial Master Teacher!"

"You are saying that... you happened to chance upon him receiving the acknowledgement of the heavens?" the Stoneleaf King asked in disbelief.

"Indeed." Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Then... what kind of sight is it?" the Stoneleaf King asked in curiosity.

"A unique aura, powerful and inviolable, would descend from the heavens and surround the person. Before this aura, all master teachers would be forced to bow down to the person and

acknowledge his identity and standing. At the same time, many bizarre phenomena would occur, such as the Trembling of the Myriad Tablets and so..." Zhang Xuan replied earnestly.

As someone who had undergone the acknowledgement ceremony thrice, he was extremely clear of the various happenings that would occur in the process.

"It does seem like the acknowledgement of a Celestial Master Teacher..." After hearing Zhang Xuan's account, the Stoneleaf King slowly nodded in agreement.

He had never seen the phenomena associated with the acknowledgement of a Celestial Master Teacher before, but he had heard of the various legends relating to it. The descriptions he had heard didn't differ much from the scene depicted by the Violetleaf King.

It seemed like there might be some truth to the Violetleaf King's words. Even if the man lying on the ground wasn't a Celestial Master Teacher, there was a good chance that he was closely related to the matter.

"The merit from capturing a Celestial Master Teacher and handing it over to the royalty is immeasurable..." At this point, the Stoneleaf King couldn't help but ponder over the implications of the matter.

It went without saying how important a Celestial Master Teacher was. If the news was true, the entire Otherworldly Demonic Tribe would go into a frenzy!

Just through this itself, he would surely be able to earn the favor of the elders. Through their guidance, even if he couldn't advance to the Emperor Stratum, he would still be able to easily reach the pinnacle of Saint realm!

But to ensure that he would be entitled to all of those valuable resources, he would have to make sure that the merit only went to

him and him alone. At the current moment... it seemed like he had practically done nothing at all!

After all, it was the Violetleaf King who had lured the Celestial Master Teacher into the ancient domain.

"Should I just kill this fellow straight? That's the only way I can claim full credit of the matter. In any case, he has disappeared for quite some time, so who would know whether he had betrayed the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe or not? As long as I move fast and clear up his corpse, there's no one who would suspect me..." A sharp glint flashed across the Stoneleaf King's eyes as he shot a discreet glance towards the Violetleaf King.

While they were part of the Qingtian Ten Great Kings, they didn't share any camaraderie amongst them. On the contrary, there was even strife rivalry amongst them.

The Qingtian Lineage allocated resources based on contribution, and considering the scarce resources in the otherworldly battlefield, he had been long wishing for his fellow Kings to drop dead.

This was precisely the reason why he didn't feel the slightest sympathy or sorrow when he heard that the other Kings had been killed, and he didn't bother to track down their murderer either. Instead, he was secretly delighted over the matter even!

"I am the one who brought that human here, and I know everything about him. Furthermore, after the time we have spent together, he already regards me as his true friend... If you were to kill me, not only will you be unable to make him submit to the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, you might even be setting up a powerful enemy for yourself in the future!" Noticing the Stoneleaf King's killing intent, Zhang Xuan said with a wry smile.

He had already heard of the relationship amongst the Ten Great Kings from the Violetleaf King. To put it in a phrase, it was every man for himself. Given so, it wasn't too surprising that the



Stoneleaf King would want to snatch a merit as large one concerning a Celestial Master Teacher.

"Violetleaf King, you must have misunderstood me... Since you were the one who found him and brought him here, it goes without saying that the merit should go to you? How could I possibly think of snatching the merit from you?" the Stoneleaf King laughed dryly as he swiftly concealed the ferocity in his eyes. However, his right hand continued grasping the Lightning Elemental Orb firmly, seemingly ready to make a move at any time.

"There's no need for us to put up such facades before one another. If I had the power to do so, I would have just taken him away right here, right now. I wouldn't have revealed his identity and wasted so many words with you." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"Just a word of advice, but you should hold back any intention you are harboring against me for the moment. Otherwise, if this human were to die, it will be impossible to verify his identity. Even if you were to send him back to our tribe, you won't be able to get anything good out of this."

"This..." Hearing those words, the Stoneleaf King hesitated for a moment before finally loosening his tight grip over the Lightning Elemental Orb. "Very well, I won't make a move against you."

The other party was right. They could claim that the human was a Celestial Master Teacher for all they wanted to, but if they couldn't substantiate their claim with evidence, it would be all for naught. In other words, the human would become worthless to them.

"You won't make a move against me? I don't believe you. I want you to swear on that to the Spirit God!" At this point, Zhang Xuan's face abruptly turned grim as he spoke.

"You want me to swear to the Spirit God?" the Stoneleaf King frowned.

"Indeed. If you swear that you won't make a move against me, I will say that we have discovered and captured the Celestial Master Teacher together when reporting the matter to the elders." Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Oh?" the Stoneleaf King frowned.

It went without saying that it would be best for one to claim sole credit for the matter. After all, an additional person in the picture meant less soup to go around.

"I know that the strength I wield is insignificant amongst the Ten Great Kings. If anyone were to make a move against me to snatch the merit from my hands, there will be nothing I can about it. Furthermore, the merit for capturing a Celestial Master Teacher is too great, I don't think that I will be able to swallow the rewards of it alone. It will be much safer with someone on the same boat... So, why not?" Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

"This..." the Stoneleaf King fell into deep contemplation.

The Violetleaf King was right. As the saying goes, the tree that rises above the forest will be torn down by the gale. Given the Violetleaf King's current strength, there was no way he would be able to ward off those who intended to snatch the merit or rewards from his hands.

Through extending an alliance to him, the Violetleaf King would be in a much safer position. In other words, the Violetleaf King would be dependent on him for protection and wouldn't betray him for the time being.

But more importantly than that, he was stronger than the Violetleaf King. It wouldn't be too late for him to find a way to deal with the other party after the tribe affirmed the Celestial Master Teacher's identity and distributed the rewards.

"What do I have to do to gain your trust?" Having come to a decision, the Stoneleaf King turned to Zhang Xuan and asked.

"Simple. I have a gourd of wine here. We shall first have a toast of blood 1 to seal our alliance before swearing to the Spirit God that neither of us will harm the other. That's the only way that I will be able to trust you!"

Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and took out a gourd of fine wine.

"A toast of blood?" the Stoneleaf King was a little hesitant after hearing those words.

"Indeed. I advise you to quickly make your decision. Once the Windleaf King arrives and learns of the matter, I fear that he will attempt to kill the both of us..." Zhang Xuan said.

Greed brought out the darkest shadows hidden within one's heart. Even master teachers were no exception to the rule, let more the unprincipled Otherworldly Demons.

Were the Windleaf King were to learn that the person before them was a Celestial Master Teacher, there was a very good chance that the other party would attempt to silence them so that he could claim full credit over the matter.

And more importantly, if the Violetleaf King were to choose to side against the Windleaf King at that point, he would be placed in a very dangerous position...

"Alright, I'll agree to it!" the Stoneleaf King made his decision.

The personalities of the Ten Great Kings was no secret, and the Windleaf King was particularly renowned for his greed and cruelty. He could indeed see the other party killing his own brethren to fulfill his desires.

And given the Windleaf King's strength, it would be hard for them to match the other party even with their combined strength, let more alone!

"Let's begin then!" Seeing that he had the other party's agreement, Zhang Xuan nodded.

He slit an incision in his finger and dripped a few droplets of blood into the gourd of wine. After shaking it slightly to mix his blood into the wine, he tossed it over to the Stoneleaf King.

Catching the gourd, the first thing the Stoneleaf King did was to extend his Spiritual Perception towards the wine. After confirming that there was nothing else mixed into the wine, he was finally able to allay his worries. Biting his finger, he dripped a few droplets of blood into the wine as well.

"Good. Let's drink it!" Zhang Xuan waved his hand and said.

"Very well!" The Stoneleaf King lifted the gourd to his mouth, and just as he was about to drink it, a thought that suddenly surfaced in his mind made him halt his action. "You go first!"

With just a glance at the other party's face, Zhang Xuan could instantly tell what the other party was worried about. He took the gourd of wine from the other party's hands and took two hearty gulps of it.

On the other hand, seeing that the Violetleaf King was fine after drinking the wine, the Stoneleaf King heaved a sigh of relief. He took the wine and drank several mouthfuls of it as well.

After which, he raised his palm up to the sky and vowed, "I, the Stoneleaf King, swear to the Spirit God that I shall honor my alliance with the Violetleaf King. We shall stand aside one another through adversities as brothers, never to betray the other..."

"I, the Violetleaf King, swear to the Spirit God that I shall honor my alliance with the Stoneleaf King..." Seeing that the Stoneleaf King had made his vow, Zhang Xuan hurriedly followed suit.

He was swearing in the Violetleaf King's name anyway, there was no need for him to hesitate.

"Since we are now allied with one another, I hope that we can team up against the Windleaf King should he try to pull off anything funny." Zhang Xuan turned to the Stoneleaf King and

said.

"Don't worry!" the Stoneleaf King reassured.

Amongst the Ten Great Kings, the Windleaf King was the only one who had an artifact that could possibly verify the identity of a Celestial Master Teacher. If it wasn't for that, there was no way they would have invited the other party over!

"Once we verify that this human is a Celestial Master Teacher, the Windleaf King could attempt to snatch him from our hands or even make a move against us. So, pay close attention to me and act on my command later on..." After a moment of thought, the Stoneleaf King turned to the Violetleaf King and instructed.

While he still didn't have unreserved trust towards the Violetleaf King, at the very least, they had already sworn to the Spirit God in their names. Naturally, he was also more inclined to trust the latter instead of the Windleaf King.

"Alright!" Zhang Xuan nodded. "I will try to sound him out later on after we confirm this human's identity. If he were to make a move against me, I hope that you can immediately step forward to slay him. We are on the same boat right now, and we will either float together or sink together."

"Un." the Stoneleaf King nodded.

Just as he was about to continue speaking, a huge gale of wind abruptly blew in the surroundings. In the distance, a towering figure could be seen flying over.

"Stoneleaf King, don't you know that I have better things to do? Why are you calling me over in such a hurry?"

Huala!

A powerful Otherworldly Demon landed on the ground before them.

# Chapter 1050: Jadeleaf King

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The Otherworldly Demon's height and aura paled in comparison to the Stoneleaf King, but there was a look of utmost coldness in his eyes. His skin was smooth like jade, and the intervals between his breaths were extremely long—a sign of his deep cultivation.

"Young Master, he's the Jadeleaf King!" the Violetleaf King anxiously sent a telepathic message to Zhang Xuan with a quivering tone. "He cultivates the Broken Jade Technique, and not only does he possess a powerful physical body, his Primordial Spirit wields frightening strength as well. His cultivation has also reached Half-Leaving Aperture realm..."

"Half-Leaving Aperture realm?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback. Turning his gaze back to the Otherworldly Demon who had just arrived, he noticed that there was an inconspicuous gleam at the other party's glabella. It seemed as if the other party was just a step off from freeing his Primordial Spirit from the constraints of his body.

Saint 5-dan Leaving Aperture realm; the term 'Leaving Aperture' referred to the Primordial Spirit fleeing from an aperture in the body and soaring freely in the heavens. In such a form, a cultivator would be more closely aligned with the world, allowing to draw forth more power from his surroundings to exert far greater fighting prowess.

The gap between Primordial Spirit realm and Leaving Aperture realm was a major demarcation line. Take the current Zhang Xuan for example, if he could catch a Primordial Spirit realm expert off guard, he would still stand a chance to slay the latter. However, if he were to encounter a Leaving Aperture realm expert, the only viable course of action he could take was to flee as far as he could.

Even a breakthrough to Saint realm wouldn't grant him the strength to face Leaving Aperture realm experts!

While Half-Leaving Aperture realm cultivators had yet to wield the devastating strength that true Saint 5-dan experts possessed, they still weren't existences that could be killed with simple physical attacks.

It was no wonder why the Violetleaf King was so fearful of the Jadeleaf King. Even in comparison to the Stoneleaf King, the strength that the Jadeleaf King wielded was frightening.

"I miscalculated. I should have relayed information regarding the Qingtian Ten Great Kings to the Qingyuan Conferred Empire Master Teacher Pavilion and have them dispatch more powerful master teachers over..." Zhang Xuan sighed deeply.

Given that he had killed quite a few Otherworldly Demon Kings himself, and considering the fact that the seal had been closely guarded by the Master Teacher Pavilion, Zhang Xuan thought that it should have been impossible for Otherworldly Demons to enter the ancient domain. Thus, he didn't think much of the matter.

The most powerful experts they had at the moment was Wu shi, Guild Leader Han, Mu shi, and Feng Xun. However, even they were a far distance away from matching up to a Half-Leaving Aperture realm expert.

It could be said that the overall prowess of their expedition team was on a different level from that of the Ten Great Kings...

If only he knew that there were such powerful enemies lurking in the ancient domain, he would have definitely requested for the Qingyuan Conferred Empire Master Teacher Pavilion to dispatch more powerful master teachers over.

While it was only a branch, they should have quite a few Saint 4-dan pinnacle master teachers.

"Forget it, it's too late for regrets now. I should focus on what's before me now..." A moment after the thought surfaced in his mind, Zhang Xuan tossed it aside decisively, not allowing it to

bother him.

There was no point thinking about what he could have done better back then. In any case, he did manage to kill six out of the ten of them. If he were to work a little harder than before, the remaining four should still be doable!

"There's an urgent matter which I require your help on." the Stoneleaf King stepped forward and said.

"Hm?" the Jadeleaf King looked at the Stoneleaf King questioningly.

"It's like that. According to the sources we have received, that human lying over there is said to be a very noble existence amongst mankind. Thus, we hope that you can help us verify his true identity!" the Stoneleaf King pointed to Feng Xun and said.

The Stoneleaf King decided not to speak about the matter concerning the Celestial Master Teacher first. At the current point in time, it was best not to reveal too much first.

"Verify his true identity?" the Jadeleaf King asked as he turned his gaze upon Feng Xun. "Judging from his clothes, he should be a combat master. Does he possess some other identity? Also... Violetleaf King, why are you here?"

After saying those words, the Jadeleaf King turned a piercing gaze towards Zhang Xuan.

"It's like that..." Zhang Xun repeated the same lie that he had told the Stoneleaf King. However, he also chose neglected to mention the words 'Celestial Master Teacher' as well.

"You are saying that in order to track down that noble existence amongst mankind, you chose to blend in together with them so as to lure the other party here?" the Jadeleaf King asked with a frown. A moment later, he nodded slightly and said, "Very well then. Let me see just what kind of existence this human is for you to go so far for him. If he is really as noble as you put him out to be,



I will help you report this matter to His Majesty on your behalf and beseech him to reward you generously!"

After saying those words, the Jadeleaf King whipped out an altar. It was different from the one which Zhang Xuan had procured from the Violetleaf King. Bronze and large, it was filled with many bizarre inscriptions that could send one's head spinning with just a look.

"That is the Immaculate Jade Altar that only the Jadeleaf King possesses. Of the Ten Great Kings, the Qingtian Emperor only bestowed it upon him... Through this altar, one can summon the Spirit God to ascertain a person's true identity and verify the authenticity of their words!" the Violetleaf King informed Zhang Xuan telepathically.

"The Qingtian Emperor bestowed it only to the Jadeleaf King?" the Jadeleaf King was neither the strongest or the weakest of the Ten Great Kings. Why would the Qingtian Emperor make such an exception for the other party?

"The Jadeleaf King lords over the Hall of Crime, and he is in charge of interrogating and punishing all criminals of the Qingtian Lineage..." the Violetleaf King explained.

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

As one who was in charge of interrogation and punishment, it was important for the Jadeleaf King to possess such an ability. Otherwise, it could cause great disorder in their judicial system.

Taking a closer look at the altar, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but feel a little confused. Somehow, he just couldn't make the association between the ability to discern a person's identity together with an altar.

His confusion didn't remain for too long.

In the next moment, the Jadeleaf King whipped out a couple of tributes and placed it on the altar. The altar released a dim glow

which consumed the tributes with a blazing flame. Following which, a sacred white glow suddenly fell upon him and Feng Xun.

Seeing how the Violetleaf King was covered amidst the glow as well, the Jadeleaf King frowned.

The Stoneleaf King's complexion wasn't too good either, and he bellowed, "Violetleaf King, we are in the midst of verifying the identity of that human. You should step aside for the moment."

"Don't worry, my presence here won't affect the results. I caught this fellow with my own hands, so I want to see for myself just who he is..." Zhang Xuan replied.

He wasn't too sure how the other party's verification technique worked, but if one thing was for sure, Feng Xun definitely wasn't a Celestial Master Teacher. If he were to step away from the glow, there was no doubt that the white glow wouldn't be able to pick up anything at all.

Standing within the white glow could potentially reveal his identity, but Zhang Xuan was confident in his ability to maintain his disguise while revealing the presence of the Celestial Master Teacher amongst them.

And of course, the revealed Celestial Master Teacher would be Feng Xun as well.

"Anything that pleases you!" Seeing the wariness in the Violetleaf King's eyes, the Stoneleaf King thought that the other party was afraid that they would steal his prey, so he could only shake his head helplessly.

"I'll continue then." the Jadeleaf King said as he continued placing more tributes on the altar.

Heaving a sigh of relief, Zhang Xuan discreetly tapped his leg on Feng Xun's back and infused the aura unique to Celestial Master Teacher into the latter's body.

This aura was the distinctive mark of a Celestial Master Teacher,

but if it wasn't driven, it would be impossible to notice it either.

It was through this means that Zhang Xuan dared to say that Feng Xun was a Celestial Master teacher without fear.

Weng!

The glow surrounding the duo gradually grew brighter and brighter. Zhang Xuan was still unable to notice anything special, but the Jadeleaf King's already had a frown deeply etched on his forehead.

"There's indeed something bizarre about that person's identity..." After saying those words, the Jadeleaf King continued placing a few more treasures on the altar.

The tributes that were previously placed on top of the altar had already been burned dry.

On the other hand, the Stoneleaf King couldn't help but tighten his fists upon the sight.

While Zhang Xuan might not have much of an understanding regarding the workings of the Immaculate Jade Altar, as one of the Upper Five Kings, he had a rough conceptualization of how it worked. The more tributes required for the altar, the higher standing the other party possessed.

After refilling the tributes time and time again, the white glow of the tribute finally gathered together as one to form four huge words—Acknowledged by the Heavens!

"As expected!" Upon seeing the words, the eyes of the Stoneleaf King reddened as his breathing hastened.

It seemed like the Violetleaf King wasn't lying. The human lying not too far away was indeed a Celestial Master Teacher just like Kong shi!

As long as he handed that human to the elders, his standing would soar through the ranks.

"Acknowledged by the Heavens... He is a Celestial Master Teacher?"

At the same time, the eyes of the Jadeleaf King also began burning with greed.

As the third strongest expert of the Five Upper Kings, he was well aware of the significance of these four words.

"That explains why these two fellows were in such a rush to find me... So they have caught themselves a huge fish..." the Jadeleaf King clenched his fists tightly in agitation.

"Jadeleaf King, this human was captured by me and Stoneleaf King. Since we have verified his identity, we intend to return to the tribe this instant to hand him over to the elders!" Seeing that his plan had succeeded, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

As innocent as those words sounded, it was intended to strike a stake between the relationship of the Stoneleaf King and the Jadeleaf King.

By mentioning that he had worked with the Stoneleaf King to capture the Celestial Master Teacher before adding that they intended to return to the tribe right now, that was as good as saying that they didn't intend to give the Jadeleaf King a share of the credit!

"This..." Hearing those words, the Stoneleaf King's face immediately warped in horror.

He too understood the significance of those words. It was a given that they would have to return to the tribe to hand the Celestial Master Teacher over to the elders, but... surely the Violetleaf King didn't have to point it out at this instant? Those words were as good as saying that they were intending to keep the benefits of this matter all to themselves.

And as he had expected, the Jadeleaf King's complexion immediately turned awful. Following which, his lips curled up to

reveal a smile completely devoid of warmth, "We haven't accomplished the mission entrusted to us by His Majesty yet. Don't you think that it is inappropriate for you to leave right now?"

"Inappropriate? Why would that be so? Don't worry, we won't implicate the other Kings in this matter. We will take full responsibility for this matter. We are willing to accept any punishment His Majesty accords us due to this matter..." Zhang Xuan replied earnestly.

Hearing those words, the Stoneleaf King nearly fainted on the spot.

At this juncture, they should be trying their best to soothe the other party's rage by emphasizing that the merit of capturing the Celestial Master Teacher belonged to everyone... And yet, that fellow actually said that the other Kings wouldn't be 'implicated' in this matter at all...

Were there any better words to provoke the Jadeleaf King than that?

"Jadeleaf King, that's not what he means..." The eyelids of the Jadeleaf King began twitching uncontrollably, and he hurriedly rushed forward to explain.

However, halfway through his words, the red-faced Jadeleaf King interjected, "Is that your opinion on this matter as well?"

"Of course, I have already discussed this matter with the Stoneleaf King! If you back down at this point, we can still consider letting you off. However, if you dare to lay your hands on our merit, we don't mind ending your life right here!" Zhang Xuan replied ferociously, seemingly desperate to protect his merit.

Right after hearing those words, the Stoneleaf King's body staggered, and he nearly blacked out on the spot.

When in the world did I say those words?

You said that you were going to sound him out, not to taunt him!

Are you a three-year-old kid? Don't you know how to hide your intentions? To voice it out right before the other party... you are dragging the both of us down to our graves!

"Good. Very good! It has been many years since anyone dared to threaten me like that..." With teeth gritted tightly in rage, the Jadeleaf King stared at the duo before him with killing intent raging in his eyes.

"Jadeleaf King, it's not what you are thinking! We have captured the Celestial Master Teacher to..." While cursing the Violetleaf King for being an incompetent ally, the Stoneleaf King hurriedly tried to explain the matter so as to calm down the situation when a groan suddenly sounded from not too far away.

Ahhhhh!

The human who was lying on the ground, Feng Xun, had woken up. Rubbing his head, he slowly got up with a dazed look in his eyes.

"What's going on? What Celestial Master Teacher?"

In his groggy state, Feng Xun heard a particularly striking phrase and subconsciously asked about it.

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# Chapter 1051: Killing One Another

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Feng Xun had only been temporarily knocked out by Zhang Xuan's palm. As a combat master who possessed a huge reserve of zhenqi and a powerful body, it was natural that it wouldn't take him too long to recover.

His head was still spinning from the earlier impact, and in his moment of daze, he heard the words 'Celestial Master Teacher', so he instantaneously assumed that he was in a safe location. As such, he let his guard down and allowed words to spill out from his mouth.

"It's good that you have woken up." Seeing that the human had woken up, the Stoneleaf King heaved a sigh of relief. He was about to grab the other party to force him to spill out some words so as to alleviate the current situation when the Violetleaf King abruptly sent a foot into the other party's face.

Peng!

The foot struck Feng Xun's head squarely, and before the latter could even process what was going on, he had already fainted once more.

"Ah?" The Stoneleaf King was stunned.

Didn't you say that the both of you have a rather close relationship with one another? Why did you look as if... you were kicking a stray animal?

Paying no heed to the knocked-out Feng Xun, the Jadeleaf King glared at Zhang Xuan and spat, "End my life? You two?"

"Indeed, the two of us will suffice to deal with you! Since we have confirmed this human's identity, you no longer possess any value to us!" Zhang Xuan replied haughtily. "If you continue to live, you will only spread word of this matter and endanger us. Thus, Stoneleaf King and I have decided that as long as you join our

alliance and swear not to speak of this matter to any soul or try to steal our merit, we will spare you this time around."

"Wonderful..." Seeing how the Violetleaf King was getting more and more arrogant, not showing the slightest respect toward him, the killing intent in the Jadeleaf King's eyes intensified. "Since you wish to kill me, it's only right for me to return the favor to you!"

Boom!

Right after saying those words, a powerful palm strike flew right for the Stoneleaf King.

In the Jadeleaf King's view, the Violetleaf King posed no threat at all. The one whom he should be wary of was the Stoneleaf King.

"Listen to me..." Seeing that the Jadeleaf King was completely enraged by the Violetleaf King's words, the Stoneleaf King anxiously tried to explain himself. However, before he could even finish his words, the Violetleaf King had already interjected with a loud bellow by the side, "Old Stone, quick, move according to our plan! Otherwise, we might very well die here!"

The Stoneleaf King nearly went insane from anger.

Plan?

When have we decided on a plan?

I only told you to follow my commands if the Jadeleaf King intended to make a move against us. Yet, before the Jadeleaf King even did anything, you went full out trying to provoke the other party. Just how in the world did I get myself stuck with an ally like you?

Furthermore, Old Stone? Stone your head! My surname is not Stone, alright?

However, he knew this wasn't the time for him to get into a conflict over the matter. It was apparent that the Jadeleaf King had already made up his mind to kill them. If he didn't fight back,



he might just end up losing his life here.

Thus, clenching his fists, the Stoneleaf King twisted the Lightning Elemental Orb in his hand, and a thick congregation of lightning fell from the sky.

Hong long!

It collided with the Jadeleaf King's palm strike, and a huge shockwave burst into the surroundings, collapsing innumerable ancient buildings. The two powerful forces were equally matched, and they ended up neutralizing one another.

"And here I was wondering where you found the guts to stand up against me. So, you have to managed to tame the Lightning Elemental Orb and gained control of this lightning formation. However, if you think that you can kill me like that, you are dreaming!"

Seeing that his attack had been struck down by the other party's lightning, the Jadeleaf King bellowed furiously as he whipped out a long saber.

Huala!

He flicked the saber, and a vacuum cut through the air.

With just a single strike, the Jadeleaf King had succeeded in tearing a rift between the heavens and the earth. As if isolated from the world, the lightning, which had been descending furiously toward him earlier, suddenly found itself unable to enter the area.

While the Stoneleaf King had tamed the Lightning Elemental Orb, he had only gained control over a small portion of the field of lightning. Due to the limits of his cultivation, he was unable to bring forth its full might. He could easily devastate any cultivator weaker than him with it, but against a Half-Leaving Aperture realm expert like the Jadeleaf King... it was still a little lacking.

"I was indeed not a match for you in the past, but times have

changed. Who knows? You might be the one who falls in the end."

Even though the Jadeleaf King had managed to fend off the first wave of lightning, the Stoneleaf King didn't despair. Instead, driving the Lightning Elemental Orb in his hands, he called forth another wave of lightning.

Huala!

The sky abruptly grew darker, and the rumbling of the thunder sounded more fearsome than ever. In the blink of an eye, the lightning shattered the vacuum that the Jadeleaf King had formed with his saber qi and appeared right above the Jadeleaf King's head.

Upon seeing the lightning above him, the Jadeleaf King didn't choose to flee immediately. Instead, an illusory figure appeared behind his back.

At Half-Leaving Aperture realm, while one's Primordial Spirit was still unable to free itself fully from the confines of the body, it could still escape from the Yuanshen acupoint and form something like an avatar, enhancing the strength that one could call forth significantly.

As expected, as soon as the illusory figure materialized, the space surrounding them was sealed off all of a sudden, trapping the Stoneleaf King and Zhang Xuan like animals in a cage. The furious streaks of lightning struck relentlessly on the cage, but the lightning was unable to breach it at all.

"Die!" After doing that, the Jadeleaf King's eyebrows shot up. He raised the saber in his hand and hacked it down upon the Stoneleaf King.

On the other hand, the Stoneleaf King knew that he wouldn't be able to match the Jadeleaf King without the augmentation of the lightning formation, so he began to panic. He quickly whipped out a long spear to face the Jadeleaf King's saber while shouting, "He is

using his Primordial Spirit to seal the surrounding space. He can only sustain this state for a very short period of time, and it will be highly damaging to his Primordial Spirit. This is the perfect opportunity to bring him down, attack!"

It would be difficult for him to stand against the Stoneleaf King alone, but with the Violetleaf King's assistance at this moment, he should be able to corner the Jadeleaf King through a pincer attack.

The sealing of space through one's Primordial Spirit was a powerful technique, but it was incredibly depleting as well. Furthermore, his lightning was also striking the seal ferociously, so no matter how powerful the other party was, he couldn't hold on for too long.

With his full might, the Stoneleaf King barely succeeded in withstanding the Jadeleaf King's assault. At that moment, he couldn't help but realize that the Violetleaf King had yet to make a move despite it being the perfect opportunity, so he quickly turned his gaze over to see what was wrong.

That glance left him nearly spurting blood.

That fellow was looking at their battle by the side with his hands crossed, seemingly not intending to help at all!

In this instant, the Stoneleaf King suddenly came to a realization. Damn it, I fell for that fellow's ploy.

From the very start, the Violetleaf King didn't intend to collaborate with him! The entire matter was a ploy to have him and the Jadeleaf King kill one another.

The previous vow had only restrained the other party from making a move against him, so it wasn't against the rules for the other party to have the Jadeleaf King deal with him.

Furthermore, no matter who died in the fight, the surviving side would still have to let him live for the time being in order to ensure that the Celestial Master Teacher remained under control. In other

words, that fellow would be the ultimate victor of the fight regardless of who won!

What a fearsome scheme.

This won't do. I can't let that fellow succeed!

Understanding this, the Stoneleaf King quickly sent a telepathic message to the Jadeleaf King while fending off the latter's attacks. "Jadeleaf King, don't fall for that fellow's tricks! He is trying to turn us against each other and have us kill one another."

"Have us kill one another?"

Seeing that there was room for negotiation, the Stoneleaf King heaved a sigh of relief as he quickly replied, "That's right! The merit from finding the Celestial Master Teacher is huge; it is more than sufficient for the three of us to share it. There's no need for us to turn against one another over such a small matter."

"Hmm..." Pondering over the Stoneleaf King's words, the Jadeleaf King was about to reply when he suddenly felt cold killing intent behind him. Unknowingly, a sword had emerged behind him, and it was aimed straight for one of his flaws, making it hard for him to deal with it.

Hu!

The Jadeleaf King quickly leaped aside to dodge the attack, but even so, the sword still managed to leave a deep slash on his back, causing him grievous injuries. Crimson blood flowed down his back profusely.

Turning around, he saw the Violetleaf King retreating several dozen meters away with his sword tightly in his grasp, fleeing out of his attack range. There was an excited gleam in the other party's eyes as he shouted, "Old Stone, you were right! That spot is indeed his mingmen."

"Damn it!" the Jadeleaf King bellowed furiously.

He had thought that there was some truth to the Stoneleaf King's words, but who would have thought that it was only a ploy to distract him while the Violetleaf King launched an assault on him? With a frenzied cry that was overflowing with fury, he sent a palm strike toward Zhang Xuan while bringing his saber down upon the Stoneleaf King simultaneously.

"I..." Not expecting that the Violetleaf King to leap into battle right when he was about to convince the Jadeleaf King, the Stoneleaf King felt incredibly stifled and crazed within.

Never in his life had he encountered anyone who was so shameless!

How can you make me take responsibility for the trouble you have caused? That's really too much!

Furthermore... turning his glance over, he realized that the Violetleaf King was already standing a safe distance away from the Jadeleaf King after launching his assault. The other party's arms were crossed before his chest as he watched upon the commotion with a look of interest.

Feeling so indignant that he could spurt blood, the Stoneleaf King knew that it was futile for him to attempt to explain himself to the Jadeleaf King anymore. He had already lost the latter's trust for good, so he could only grit his teeth and focus on the battle.

Boom boom boom!

Even though the Jadeleaf King possessed higher cultivation than the Stoneleaf King, the Stoneleaf King was able to even the playing field with the powerful Lightning Elemental Orb in his hands and his superior physical defense. On top of that, the Violetleaf King's previous assault had dealt significant damage to the Jadeleaf King, so the both parties found themselves evenly matched for the time being.

However, the devastating shockwave that emanated from their

powerful clashes caused the entire ancient city they were in to collapse uncontrollably, forming rubble all around.

Incredible... Seeing the strength the battling duo wielded, Zhang Xuan gave them a huge thumbs up.

No wonder they were the Five Upper Kings, the fighting prowess that they possessed was indeed frightening!

With Zhang Xuan's current strength, he could easily decimate any Saint 2-dan pinnacle cultivator. However, against experts of the Stoneleaf King and Jadeleaf King's caliber, the only option for him was to flee as far as he could.

Putting aside battling them, even the shockwaves emanated by their fight were hard for him to bear.

As time passed, the battle between the both of them intensified.

Logically speaking, with the Stoneleaf King's superior defense and control over the powerful lightning field, the Jadeleaf King should have fallen already. Yet, the both sides were still fighting on equal grounds.

Nevertheless, it was apparent that the Stoneleaf King held the decisive advantage in the battle. With the lightning formation in his hands, he was able to send wave after wave of powerful strikes at the Jadeleaf King relentlessly, causing injuries to gradually accumulate all over the Jadeleaf King's body. Without a power source like the lightning formation to fuel his attacks, the Jadeleaf King found his stamina and zhenqi depleting swiftly as well.

"Damn all of you... Even if I have to die, I will bring the both of you down with me!" Knowing that he would only be killed at this rate, the Jadeleaf King roared furiously as immense power burst forth from his body. The illusory figure behind him suddenly grew larger, and finally, as if breaking past its bottleneck, it freed itself entirely from the body.

That... He drew his Primordial Spirit out from his body

forcefully! Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes in alarm.

Back then, he had encountered such a situation with the Waterleaf King as well.

Back then, in a moment of rage, the Waterleaf King had used a secret art to draw out his Primordial Spirit to attack him. However, it was a pity that the other party had chosen the wrong method of attack, resulting in his failure!

Currently, the Jadeleaf King was steadily accumulating injuries, and he knew that he would be killed eventually. Thus, he decided to go all out and use the secret art to draw his Primordial Spirit from his body.

Using the secret art, even if he were to survive the side effects, he would sustain permanent damage, and his cultivation would decline sharply. However, one thing was for sure—he would surely be able to kill the darned duo before him.

If the Stoneleaf King is killed, it is unlikely that I will be spared... I should find a place to hide in first. Considering the drastic side effects that came with the utilization of the secret art, Zhang Xuan knew that the Jadeleaf King was already determined to kill the both of them, and he couldn't help but frown.

This situation wasn't advantageous for him.

He had intended to spectate the battle from afar, but if the Jadeleaf King were to become desperate and go after him right before his death, that would be disastrous.

Thus, Zhang Xuan immediately got up and prepared to flee from the battle. At that moment, however, a figure gradually rose from the ground.

As that figure rose, he shook his head vehemently to shake out the grogginess in his mind.

That figure was Feng Xun. Due to his powerful constitution, his ability to recover was truly incredible!

"What is going on? Where am I?" Feng Xun mumbled in confusion beneath his breath.

Just as he barely opened his eyes, he saw a brick heading right toward his face.

Padah!

With his eyes rolling up, Feng Xun fainted once more.



## Chapter 1052: Fudging

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It was not convenient to allow Feng Xun to see the current sight before him. Otherwise, how could Zhang Xuan explain how he was able to disguise himself as an Otherworldly Demon and have the Stoneleaf King and Jadeleaf King fight against one another? Not to mention, even if he could come up with an explanation, it was another matter whether Feng Xun would trust him or not. After all, anything concerning the Otherworldly Demons required caution.

Thus, the most effective method to use at this point was to just knock the other party out.

It was simple, efficient, and effective. There was no point going to so much trouble when there was such an ideal solution. Besides, the bricks from the collapsed buildings all around him only seemed to be further tempting him into it.

Zhang Xuan subconsciously lowered his gaze to shoot a glance at Feng Xun, and he saw the latter lying on the ground with his face still twitching uncontrollably. It was as if he was unable to believe that a Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall like him would end up being knocked out three times consecutively. Furthermore, it seemed to be getting more and more humiliating each time.

Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan turned his attention back to the duo fighting in the sky, and his eyebrows shot up.

After the Jadeleaf King drew out his Primordial Spirit, the Stoneleaf King immediately fell into a disadvantage. Despite the superior defense that the Stoneleaf King possessed, it took mere moments for the Jadeleaf King to inflict injuries all over his body and even sever his arm, causing the Lightning Elemental Orb to fall to the ground. Fresh blood trickled profusely down his body, and his face turned pale.

It seemed like the Jadeleaf King had realized that the key to the Stoneleaf King power lay in the Lightning Elemental Orb. Without the augmentation from the lightning formation, there was no way the Stoneleaf King could stand against him.

"Let's die together then!" Suffering grievous wounds, the Stoneleaf King knew that he couldn't stand against the Jadeleaf King in his current state. Thus, with a furious roar, he also utilized his secret art and drew his Primordial Spirit out.

The Stoneleaf King didn't possess a cultivation as high as the Jadeleaf King. Even after drawing his Primordial Spirit out, the Jadeleaf King could still live by finding a suitable body to house himself in, but the same option wasn't open to the Stoneleaf King. Thus, this could be considered a suicidal attack by him.

Hong long long!

The two powerful Primordial Spirits began clashing with one another, and the intensity of the battle was hiking up as time passed. Zhang Xuan surveyed his surroundings, only to note that the surroundings had really been completely sealed. Thus, he could only shake his head helplessly.

Given the current circumstances, there was no way he would be able to escape. Even if he chose to hide in the Myriad Anthive Nest, he wouldn't be able to hide the nest itself. With just a scan from their Spiritual Perception, he would be found in an instant. By then, he would be completely cornered, putting him in an even worse position.

Zhang Xuan frowned. If the Stoneleaf King wins, I can just poison him to death. However, if the Jadeleaf King wins, I will be in deep trouble.

A battle at such a level was something he couldn't hope to intervene in with his current strength. If he forcefully got involved, he would be killed before he could even do anything.

If the Stoneleaf King won, he would still hold the initiative. However, if the Jadeleaf King won, considering what he had done to the other party previously, there was no way the other party would let him off.

Taking another look at the battle, he saw that the Stoneleaf King's Primordial Spirit was being overwhelmed by the Jadeleaf King, forced to retreat again and again. At this rate, it was only a matter of time before the Stoneleaf King lost.

I really miscalculated... Zhang Xuan's mouth twitched.

As expected of the third strongest expert of the Ten Great Kings. Even with the Stoneleaf King in control of the lightning formation, it seemed like the one who would emerge victorious in the end was still the Jadeleaf King.

What should I do? Seeing that the Stoneleaf King was on the verge of succumbing to the Jadeleaf King, Zhang Xuan paced around worriedly. However, in that moment, he suddenly caught sight of a certain figure not too far away.

After drawing his Primordial Spirit out, the Jadeleaf King had left his body lying completely unguarded by the side.

He likes to draw out his Primordial Spirit, doesn't he? Hehehe... With a sinister chuckle, Zhang Xuan walked over to the Jadeleaf King's body.

Zhang Xuan had to admit that the fellow's Broken Jade Technique was indeed rather powerful. It had granted his body exceptional durability and sturdiness. While it was not on par with the Stoneleaf King's, it was plenty fearsome.

Drawing the Glacier Rain Sword, Zhang Xuan hacked down forcefully on the Jadeleaf King's body, but to his astonishment, he was unable to breach the other party's defense.

It seemed like the Jadeleaf King hadn't left his body completely unprotected after all. He seemed to have used some kind of

powerful secret art to reinforce his body's defense before drawing his Primordial Spirit out.

Next, Zhang Xuan tried to place his finger on the Jadeleaf King's acupoints to infuse his zhenqi in, but a short moment later, he shook his head.

The Jadeleaf King's body was wholesome like jade. With Zhang Xuan's current strength, he was unable to force his zhenqi into the other party's body to poison him.

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist, and a pile of lava appeared before him.

Previously, when he was passing through the lava, he had taken the opportunity to secretly store some of it in his storage ring, thinking that he could utilize the heat to smith better weapons. It was good that he had done so, because it happened that he had a good use for it at this very moment.

With another flick of his wrist, he threw the lava right at the fellow before him.

Tzzzzzzzzzz!

As soon as the lava came into contact with the other party's body, the sizzling sound of corrosion immediately echoed loudly in the air. The body, which even the Glacier Rain Sword was unable to cut through, began melting.

Not bad... Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction.

Honestly speaking, even when stored within the storage ring, the lava would still cool down very soon. Thus, it was good that he could find a use for it now.

As powerful as the body of the Jadeleaf King was, it still paled in comparison to the lava at a hundred meters deep in the lava pool.

"You..."

On the other hand, the Jadeleaf King seemed to have noticed

something from above, and glancing downward at his body, he nearly spurted blood and died on the spot.

As he had yet to fully reach Leaving Aperture realm, it was highly damaging for him to force his Primordial Spirit out of his body. However... as long as his physical body remained unharmed, he could still return to it. He would have faced a sharp decline in his cultivation from doing so, but at the very least, he would still have been able to live. Yet, who could have known that someone would attempt to burn his body?

That was equivalent to having one's home burned down by an arsonist! His Primordial Spirit no longer had a place to return to anymore!

"You scoundrel!" the Jadeleaf King spat in anger.

In his moment of daze, the Stoneleaf King managed to get a few attacks in, which nearly caused his Primordial Spirit to dissipate.

"I will deal with you first before killing that fellow." As angry as the Jadeleaf King was, he knew that he wouldn't be able to get even with the Violetleaf King without dealing with the Stoneleaf King first. Thus, with a furious roar, he charged forward and launched a frenzied wave of attacks on the Stoneleaf King.

Boom boom boom boom!

Deafening explosions reverberated across the horizon, and the spiritual energy within a radius of several dozen kilometers was disrupted by the intense battle. Not too long later, the Stoneleaf King's Primordial Spirit finally dissipated under the relentless assault of the Jadeleaf King.

The dissipation of one's Primordial Spirit was equivalent to the complete destruction of one's soul. In such a state, not even a deity could save one.

The reason the Stoneleaf King was ranked fourth among the Five Upper Kings was due to the immense strength his physical body

possessed. However, having focused too much of his efforts on developing his physical body, his Primordial Spirit had ended up being slightly weaker than his peers. As such, the only plausible conclusion in a clash with the Jadeleaf King was his defeat.

Of course, considering the situation back then, the Stoneleaf King had no choice but to pit his Primordial Spirit against the Jadeleaf King's too. His limbs had been severed, and his physical body had sustained grievous injuries. If he hadn't drawn his soul out using his secret art, he would have died as well.

The only difference was how long it took.

"It's your turn..."

After slaying the Stoneleaf King, the Jadeleaf King immediately turned to the culprit who had reduced his physical body into a puddle of goo. With a furious roar, he charged forward.

"Kill me, and I will kill this Celestial Master Teacher!" Zhang Xuan quickly held Feng Xun up and placed the latter before him. "Think about it. As long as he remains alive, you can hand him over to our tribe. With the contribution you earn from that, finding a new body for you to possess and regaining your strength will be a walk in the park."

At this moment, this was the only leverage he had over the Jadeleaf King, as well as the only card he could play.

The Jadeleaf King was tempted to skin the fellow before him alive, but there was sense in the other party's words. If the Celestial Master Teacher were to die, the battle that he had fought would have been for naught. After all he had been through, this was an outcome he couldn't accept.

"Do you think that I will trust you?" Forcing himself to remain calm, the Jadeleaf King glared at the Violetleaf King with wintry eyes.

If not for the other party, he wouldn't have ended up fighting

with the Stoneleaf King, landing himself in such a pitiful state. He had decided that from this point on, he wouldn't believe a single word that the other party said... including even punctuation!

Holding Feng Xun's neck tightly, Zhang Xuan gazed at the Jadeleaf King nonchalantly. "It doesn't matter whether you trust me or not. However, there is one fact that you have to acknowledge. If this human dies, you won't be able to obtain anything."

"You're right. If he dies, I won't be able to obtain anything. However, without a body, I won't be able to live for long either. Since the eventual outcome is death anyway, don't you think that I will be better off finding another companion to accompany me on the journey to hell?" the Jadeleaf King spat coldly.

If he had reached Saint 5-dan Leaving Aperture realm, his Primordial Spirit might still have been able to survive outside of his body. However... he had used his secret art to escape from the confines of his body, and that had dealt heavy damage to his Primordial Spirit. If he couldn't find a body to house his Primordial Spirit soon, it wouldn't be long before he breathed his last.

This was similar to how an infant that was born after forty weeks of pregnancy was the healthiest. If one were to attempt to conduct a caesarean delivery prematurely, it could potentially be damaging to both the mother and the child.

Such was the same for the Primordial Spirit as well.

At Half-Leaving Aperture realm, a cultivator would have already opened their Yuanshen acupoint, the pathway for the Primordial Soul to escape from the confines of the body. They still couldn't draw it out, not because it was impossible to do so, but because their Primordial Spirit wasn't strong enough for it yet.

Such was the case for the Jadeleaf King. His Primordial Spirit was still too weak to sustain itself, so he needed to find a body to nourish it. At the current rate, his Primordial Spirit would slowly

wear thin and eventually dissipate.

In a sense, this was similar to the woes faced by soul oracles, the only difference being that the time soul oracles had was significantly shorter.

"Without a body? Isn't the Stoneleaf King's body lying right over there? You can possess it!" Zhang Xuan said with a smile.

"You..." the Jadeleaf King's eyes were glacier cold. "There is a fundamental difference in the cultivation techniques we practice, so if I possess his body, I will be in constant anguish and suffering."

"This..." Zhang Xuan rubbed his lower jaw with a frown. "I see. That makes things a little troublesome."

Despite his lack of understanding of Primordial Spirits, through his extensive knowledge of souls from the heritage of the soul oracles, he knew that the other party was speaking the truth.

It was true that the Jadeleaf King would be able to survive by possessing the Stoneleaf King's body, but due to the fundamental differences in their cultivation techniques and constitutions, not only would he suffer a steep fall in his fighting prowess, he would be in constant misery as well.

"Right!" Zhang Xuan didn't hesitate for long before slapping his head in realization, seemingly having thought of something. "Why didn't I think of it earlier? I happen to have specially crafted a puppet not too long ago, and since it is attributeless, there is no way it can clash with your cultivation technique. Why don't you enter it to recuperate for the time being? Once we bring the Celestial Master Teacher back to our tribe and receive the reward, you will surely be able to make the breakthrough to Leaving Aperture realm, and by then... it won't matter whether you have a body or not!"

"Puppet?" The Jadeleaf King frowned.

"That's right!" Zhang Xuan nodded. He flicked his wrist, and a



huge Otherworldly Demon puppet appeared before his eyes.

It was one of the puppets that he had taken out of the underground cavern where Wu Yangzi had been imprisoned. After resolving the flaws in its structure, it wielded prowess comparable to a Saint 3-dan cultivator.

"This is forged out of the body of an ordinary tribesman, so it is attributeless. It does complement with my Primordial Spirit fairly well." The Jadeleaf King took a look at the puppet and hesitated.

The puppet had been forged using the living body of an Otherworldly Demon, and it was driven by a reserve of spiritual energy at its core. While it was weak, its strength lay in that it was attributeless, so it was a better fit with his Primordial Spirit compared to the Stoneleaf King's body.

Naturally, this also meant that he could display greater fighting prowess within the body of the puppet as well.

"To tell you the truth, you have nothing to earn from killing me. In the first place, the one who tried to kill you wasn't me but the Stoneleaf King. Besides, given the limited strength I wield, there's no way that I will be able to harm you!" Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"It took me a great amount of effort to forge this puppet, and I was intending to use it to craft a clone. However, since you require it, I will give it to you to serve as a temporary body. Once we return to the tribe with the Celestial Master Teacher, everything can be resolved easily."

Saying so, Zhang Xuan patted his puppet fondly, seemingly a little reluctant to part with his treasure.

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# Chapter 1053: Slaying the Jadeleaf King

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"Humph!"

The Jadeleaf King harrumphed coldly as he swiftly analyzed the situation he was in.

His physical body had been destroyed, and if he were to attempt to kill the Violetleaf King, the Celestial Master Teacher would surely die as well... and once that happened, there would be no hope for him.

Just like what the other party had said, as long as he took the Celestial Master Teacher back to the tribe, he would be entitled to all kinds of rewards—the strengthening of his Primordial Spirit, the heightening of his cultivation, or even obtaining a powerful body would be available options for him.

I should just agree to his demands first. The most important thing for me at the moment is to remain alive. In any case, the journey back to the tribe will be a long one, so there will be plenty of opportunities for me to kill him while his guard is down.

Gradually, a plan surfaced in the Jadeleaf King's mind.

During the long journey back to the tribe, it was inevitable that the Violetleaf King would lower his guard from time to time. As soon as that happened, he would be able to strike and rid that despicable scoundrel before him.

That way, he would be able to exact vengeance without compromising the safety of the Celestial Master Teacher before him.

This would not be an ideal moment for him to make his move. The Violetleaf King was clearly guarded, and if he were to make a reckless move, he would be the one to lose out in the end.

In his Primordial Spirit form, he was indeed powerful. However, he could not maintain this state for too long.

"Allow me to take a look at your puppet." After a moment of contemplation, the Jadeleaf King flew over to the puppet and began examining it closely with his Spiritual Perception.

To his surprise, the puppet was extremely well-made. While the materials used for it were low quality, the craftsmanship did well to maximize its strength within its constraints. The puppet might have been a little weak, but once complemented with his Primordial Spirit, it would still be able to display considerable fighting prowess.

It would not match up to his prior strength, but it would be more than sufficient to deal with a mere Violetleaf King.

After making such calculations, he examined every aspect of the puppet carefully, and after confirming that there were no traps hidden within it, he heaved a sigh of relief.

Hu!

With a swift movement, his Primordial Spirit dived into the puppet.

A moment later, he opened the puppet's eyes and began moving his new limbs. He turned his gaze toward the Violetleaf King and said, "Alright, you should be able to release the Celestial Master Teacher now, right?"

"Of course!" Chuckling softly, Zhang Xuan tossed Feng Xun casually to the ground.

Due to the heavy impact Feng Xun had suffered from the brick, he still had not woken up.

The Jadeleaf King was stunned. He released the human just like that?

He had expected the other party to continue holding the Celestial Master Teacher hostage so as to ensure his own safety. To obediently release the Celestial Master Teacher at his command... was the other party really not afraid that he would claim his life?

"Fool! You are asking for death!"

Regardless, this was a good opportunity to strike. The eyes of the Jadeleaf King lit up as he swiftly pulled the unconscious Celestial Master Teacher behind him to protect the latter. At the same time, he charged forward to launch a devastating attack on the Violetleaf King.

After how the Violetleaf King had made a fool out of him, how could he, the proud Jadeleaf King, possibly allow the other party to continue existing in the world?

"Jeez. I have already offered you a chance to continue living, but you just don't know how to treasure it." Seeing the Jadeleaf King charging ferociously toward him, the Violetleaf King shook his head calmly and sighed. Instead of making any attempts to dodge or counterattack, he lifted his hand casually and snapped, "Down!"

Kacha!

The charging Jadeleaf King abruptly felt a surge of intense pain assaulting him, causing his body to stiffen on the spot.

Putong!

The momentum from his previous action dragged him onto the ground.

The Jadeleaf King narrowed his eyes in disbelief. "You... You laced the puppet with poison?"

In just a mere instant, he understood why the other party dared cast aside the only leverage over him without any hesitation. It turned out that the puppet had been poisoned! Furthermore, for a Primordial Spirit as powerful as his to succumb to it, it was apparent that it was an exceptionally potent poison.

"You are quite smart. If you pledge loyalty to me and obey every single one of my commands without any hesitation, I can spare you!" Zhang Xuan said calmly.

He had already foreseen this from the moment he took his puppet out. Previously, when he was tapping the puppet fondly, he had discreetly infused his Heaven's Path zhenqi into it.

His Heaven's Path zhenqi had no particular attribute, so even if the Jadeleaf King noticed it, he probably only thought that it was the innate power that the puppet harnessed, so he didn't pay it any heed.

In other words, from the moment that the Jadeleaf King sent his Primordial Spirit into the puppet, he was already doomed.

"You want me to pledge loyalty to you? Dream on!" the Jadeleaf King roared furiously as his Primordial Spirit charged toward the acupoint that he had entered the puppet from.

Since he was able to enter the puppet, naturally, he should be able to leave as well.

"You might have been able to enter the puppet easily, but it won't be that easy for you to leave it!" Zhang Xuan said with a wry smile.

The Jadeleaf King's heart turned cold upon hearing those words. He realized that every single acupoint on the puppet had been sealed by a unique zhenqi. Even with the overwhelming strength that he commanded, he found that he was unable to break out.

All of his escape routes were sealed; he was trapped.

Despite all of the precautions that he had taken, he had still ended up falling for the Violetleaf King's ploy. Stifled, the Jadeleaf King nearly spewed a mouthful of blood, but there was no blood within the puppet for him to spew. The more he thought about the matter, the more despaired and frightened he felt.

Even though the fellow standing before him being weaker than him, he found himself feeling deeply terrified of the other party. Preying on the weaknesses in his mind, the other party had managed to turn him against the Stoneleaf King and nearly had him killed. Even after he emerged victorious in the fight, it turned

out that the other party had already prepared a subsequent measure to deal with him—a puppet laced with lethal poison.

Had the Violetleaf King been such a formidable figure all along? Or could it be that...

Suddenly, a possibility surfaced in the Jadeleaf King's mind. "You aren't the Violetleaf King!"

"Not bad at all, you do have some wits. At the very least, you came to the truth right before the end." Zhang Xuan chuckled as he began morphing his body back amid cracking sounds.

Geji! Geji!

A moment later, he reverted back to his original appearance.

The Jadeleaf King narrowed his eyes in shock. "You are a human? Wait, could it be... you are the real Celestial Master Teacher?"

Celestial Master Teacher, an existence that even the heavens had acknowledged. How could a person who had been acknowledged by the heavens possibly be so useless as to be captured that easily and be knocked out time and time again? Not to mention, recalling how the Violetleaf King had, for some peculiar reason, insisted on standing beside the other human a moment ago... the truth could not have been clearer to him at this moment.

"I'll give you some time to think about it. Become my servant, and you will be able to avoid death," Zhang Xuan said impassively, choosing not to respond to the Jadeleaf King's doubts.

The implications that came with his identity as a Celestial Master Teacher was simply too great. Even the notion of revealing it to the Master Teacher Pavilion left him feeling deeply apprehensive, so how could he be willing to speak of it to an Otherworldly Demon?

"You want me to become your servant? Dream on! But... to have lost to a Celestial Master Teacher like you, I admit my defeat!" the Jadeleaf King sneered coldly before shaking his head despondently.

Following that, a golden fluid suddenly flowed from the puppet's eyes before the puppet fell heavily to the ground.

"You..."

Zhang Xuan quickly rushed up to the puppet, only to realize that the Primordial Spirit within had already dissipated.

Trapped within the puppet, the Jadeleaf King was unable to escape nor explode his Primordial Spirit. At the same time, he was also unwilling to bow to a human. Thus, he had chosen to end his life!

"Decisive and very loyal to the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe as well," Zhang Xuan remarked.

Choosing to end his life knowing that he had been cornered, it seemed that despite being greedy and vicious, the Jadeleaf King was deeply loyal to his kind.

Just that... it sure is a huge waste of my puppet! Looking at the lifeless puppet lying on the ground, Zhang Xuan felt his heart ache.

The Jadeleaf King's Primordial Spirit was simply too strong. While he had been unable to explode his Primordial Spirit, the energy that was released with his suicide still resulted in the destruction of the puppet's internal structure, resulting in it being effectively crippled. After all the trouble he had gone through to raise it to Saint 3-dan...

However, these two Kings do have quite a few treasures with them. Putting everything else aside, just the saber and spear they have in their possession are at Saint low-tier. Well, they are only at low-tier, but that's not too bad either...

Given Zhang Xuan's proficiency in smithing, it seemed like it would be... impossible for him to fix the puppet. Fortunately, the wealth that the two Kings possessed was more than enough to make up for the loss of his puppet.

On top of the Saint low-tier sword and spear, the Jadeleaf King

had the bizarre altar and innumerable tributes. Those might just prove useful at some point in time.

I should just take everything first. Without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan grabbed the storage rings of the duo before heading toward the Lightning Elemental Orb on the ground.

The orb was initially in the Stoneleaf King's possession, but after the Jadeleaf King mercilessly severed his arm, the orb ended up falling to the ground. At the current moment, it was emitting a dim light.

Stopping before the orb, Zhang Xuan squatted down and reached out to grab it.

Bzzzzzzt!!!

Before his hand could even come into contact with the orb, a searing pain assaulted his palm. Countless mini streaks of lightning burst toward him, attempting to burn him to cinders.

Upon seeing the sight, Zhang Xuan's mouth twitched. He hurriedly leaped aside to avoid the attack.

The Lightning Elemental Orb was indeed powerful, but with his current strength, even getting close to it was difficult, let alone taming it.

Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella in distress. But it would be extremely wasteful of me to leave an artifact as powerful as this lying here.

It was one thing if he had not seen it, but now that he had seen it and it was within reach, would he not be letting himself down if he did not claim it for his own?

Perhaps I could try that...

After a moment of thought, his eyes suddenly lit up. Placing the body of the Stoneleaf King before him, he slowly advanced toward the Lightning Elemental Orb.



Bzzzzt!

Sensing the approach of a lifeform, the Lightning Elemental Orb immediately sent innumerable streaks of lightning toward the invader who was trespassing on its territory. However, it was all perfectly warded off by the Stoneleaf King's body.

In a few moments, Zhang Xuan was already standing right before orb, and with a swift movement, his hand reached out and touched it.

Kacha!

Right after Zhang Xuan muttered 'flaws' in his mind, he was abruptly sent flying by a powerful surge of electricity. His body stiffened, and smoke drifted from his hair, which was standing on end. At the same time, his clothes were also ripped into tatters from the surge of electricity, creating quite an unkempt look.

This... Isn't the Lightning Elemental Orb a little too powerful?

It took a long while before Zhang Xuan could recover from his daze.

It was fortunate that his soul had been tempered by the lightning previously and his body had achieved the level equivalent to a Saint low-tier artifact. Otherwise, that burst of lightning could have easily left him bedridden for several days.

Alright. Let me see if there's any way I can tame it with my current strength, Zhang Xuan thought as he turned his consciousness toward the Library of Heaven's Path.

In the momentary touch back then, he had managed to achieve his goal and compile a corresponding book regarding the Lightning Elemental Orb.

And as expected, with just a thought, a book began flying over from one of the shelves, and it landed right in Zhang Xuan's hands.

He flipped it open casually.

"Lightning Elemental Orb, an artifact produced in regions where the Power of Lightning accumulates. It can be used as the cornerstone of lightning attribute formations, as well as a tool to control them..."

The content within the book flowed into Zhang Xuan's head swiftly, and within just an instant, he had already found out what the flaws of the Lightning Elemental Orb were.

So that's the case... I should be able to tame it even with my current strength. However, it will still be difficult for me to drive it unless I reach Primordial Spirit realm.

After understanding the situation concerning the Lightning Elemental Orb, Zhang Xuan shook his head with bitterly.

Just as he had guessed, the field of lightning was indeed a grade-8 formation. As such, it could only be controlled via one's Primordial Spirit. Even if he could successfully tame the Lightning Elemental Orb, it would still be impossible for him to use it to gain control over the lightning formation.

Forget it, I should tame the Lightning Elemental Orb first and think about everything else later...

Casting the dilemmas in his mind aside, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze toward the Lightning Elemental Orb once more.

He might have been unable to use it at that moment, but there would surely be a day when he would be able to wield it. A grade-8 Slaughter Formation... that was a treasure that countless cultivators would love to lay their hands on!

# Chapter 1054: Black Sandstorm of Oblivion

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If I wish to tame the Lightning Elemental Orb, I will first have to use my zhenqi to nourish it. After reading the details regarding the orb in the Library of Heaven's Path, Zhang Xuan had already gained a thorough understanding of its strengths and flaws.

Forcefully taming it was not a feasible solution, especially considering the limits of his current strength. Thus, he could only nourish it slowly, just as the Stoneleaf King had done earlier.

Raising his hands, he began sending out surges of zhenqi from his palm toward the Lightning Elemental Orb from a distance away.

Weng!

Sensing zhenqi encroaching on its territory, the orb began revolving as it emitted a deep blue glow. In an instant, countless streaks of lightning fell from the sky.

Zhang Xuan swiftly lifted the Stoneleaf King's body above him to fend off the lightning. Unfortunately, Feng Xun, who was lying not too far away, wasn't so lucky. Two streaks of lightning breached the lingering seal that the Jadeleaf King had set up previously and struck his body, causing it to convulse with even greater intensity than before.

It was fortunate that the seal had neutralized most of the energy contained in the lightning, or else those two strikes could have claimed Feng Xun's life.

I must proceed a little more carefully... Zhang Xuan's mouth twitched.

He quickly calmed himself down before gathering his zhenqi to infuse it over once more. This time, he proceeded a little more carefully and slowly, and it did not induce any retaliation from the Lightning Elemental Orb. Around twenty minutes later, delight covered Zhang Xuan's face.

With just a wave of his hand, the Lightning the Elemental Orb gradually flew toward him. After twenty minutes of effort, he had successfully managed to tame it!

It sure is a powerful artifact... Holding the sphere in his palm, Zhang Xuan could feel the immense power contained within, and his eyes lit up in excitement.

Just as he had deduced before, the Lightning Elemental Orb was the key to controlling the lightning formation. While he was unable to drive it due to his lacking cultivation at the moment, fortunately, it was still within his means to restrict the lightning formation to within the orb.

Taking a deep breath, he raised the Lightning Elemental Orb in the air and began driving his zhenqi into it.

"Return," Zhang Xuan muttered beneath his breath.

Hualala!

Countless streaks of lightning in the surroundings began flowing toward the Lightning Elemental Orb like countless streams converging into the vast ocean.

"Mmm?"

At this moment, Feng Xun regained consciousness once more. Upon seeing the sight before him, his eyes widened in astonishment, and his body began trembling in fear.

The sight before him was simply too frightening. A fellow who had nearly been charred black from a lightning strike was raising his hand before him, and countless streaks of lightning were converging in his direction, seemingly attempting to tear him apart.

Is this hell, or am I dreaming? That man... Principal Zhang?

Taking a closer look, Feng Xun realized that the charred black fellow was none other than Zhang Xuan!

Suddenly recalling the situation that they were in, he quickly scanned his surroundings, and soon, he saw the Stoneleaf King's body lying right beside Zhang Xuan, not moving or breathing in the slightest.

Principal Zhang managed to kill the Stoneleaf King? Feng Xun could hardly believe his eyes.

It was only in this instant that he confirmed that he wasn't dead yet.

Before he was knocked out, he had clashed face on with the Stoneleaf King, and the latter had been so powerful that he had been defeated within a single encounter.

Yet, after regaining consciousness, he suddenly found the carcass of the Stoneleaf King lying cold on the ground... Just what in the world happened while he was out? What did Principal Zhang sacrifice in order to kill the Stoneleaf King and save him?

More importantly... while he was not dead, why was his body convulsing uncontrollably? Furthermore, that dull pain that was constantly assaulting his head... just who was the scoundrel who had knocked him out time and time again?

Pondering over the matter for some time, Feng Xun was still unable to make sense of the situation, so he gave up on it altogether. Turning his attention back to the charred black fellow, he couldn't help but feel deeply touched within. Back then, he had attempted to teach the other party a lesson to bring honor back to the Combat Master Hall, and yet, the other party was still willing to cast aside their differences and save him in this crucial moment.

Just recalling what he had done previously left him deeply ashamed. He really did not know how he should face the other party after that.

It was no wonder Luo Ruoxin had chosen the other party over him. If he were Luo Ruoxin, he would have made the same decision

as well!

Hu!

Not too long later, the lightning in the sky was finally contained within the Lightning Elemental Orb, and Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. With a flick of his wrist, he stowed the orb back into his storage ring.

Stretching his slightly stiffened body, he was just about to drive his zhenqi to recuperate from his injuries when he saw Feng Xun walking up to him.

"Principal Zhang, you have my deepest gratitude for saving my life." Feng Xun bowed down deeply.

Zhang Xuan hurriedly waved his hand in embarrassment. "There's no need to stand on ceremony."

While he had only done it due to the compelling circumstances then, it was a fact that he had knocked the other party out thrice and electrocuted him once. Even at this moment, the other party's body was still convulsing non-stop. That was probably an aftereffect from the brick smash and electrocution. If the other party were to learn of this matter, would the other party rip him apart then and there?

Forget it, what the other party did not know would not hurt him. It would not be good for them to sour their camaraderie over a trivial matter like this.

However, just because Zhang Xuan did not speak of it, it did not mean that Feng Xun was not going to broach the subject. "Principal Zhang, I would like to ask, did the Stoneleaf King make a move on me while I was unconscious? Somehow, there is a dull pain at the back of my head..."

"That... That's not important at all!" With twitching lips, Zhang Xuan hurriedly shook his head. "Let's return now. Wu shi and the others should have recovered by now..."

With the lightning formation back in the Lightning Elemental Orb, the sky gradually cleared up. Not too long later, they arrived at where Wu Shi and the others were hiding. At this moment, they had already left the insides of the Golden Origin Cauldron.

Taking a look at the unconscious Golden Origin Cauldron, Zhang Xuan heaved a deep sigh before stowing it back into his storage ring.

While he had succeeded in waking up Lu Chong and Wei Ruyan, the situation was slightly different for the Golden Origin Cauldron. As an artifact, its spirit was fundamentally different from that of a human's soul, so the means that he had utilized previously would be completely ineffective on it. He would have to find a higher tier Blacksmith Guild and gather the books there to find a solution for it.

"Principal Zhang has managed to kill the Stoneleaf King..." Returning to the crowd, Feng Xun shared the joyous news with the expedition team. In an instant, flabbergasted looks surfaced all around them.

Even Wu Shi had been unable to stand against the Stoneleaf King's strength back then, and yet, Zhang Xuan had actually succeeded in killing the latter and even resolved the lightning formation. This was truly inconceivable. They could not help but turn to look at Zhang Xuan with gazes of admiration.

Zhang Xuan had initially intended to explain the situation to them, but eventually, he decided against it.

It was hard to explain how he managed to turn the Jadeleaf King against the Stoneleaf King, so revealing this matter could potentially bring him significant trouble. Since that was the case, he might as well remain silent about it.

"Most of you haven't recuperated fully from your injuries yet, and the path ahead is bound to be more dangerous than ever." Noting that there were still quite a few people who were severely

wounded, Zhang Xuan proposed, "Why don't we just rest here for the night? We can proceed after we have fully recovered."

After what they had been through, the expedition team also knew that the ancient domain was filled with danger at every corner, and they would have to be in their peak state if they wanted to remain alive. Thus, they nodded in agreement and sat back down to recuperate from their injuries.

Meanwhile, Zhang Xuan found an opportunity to head to a remote location alone to let Luo Ruoxin out while entering the Myriad Anthive Nest himself.

Hu!

The Lightning Elemental Orb appeared in his hand.

With a thought, he drew his soul out from his glabella before grabbing the Lightning Elemental Orb.

Previously, he had used the lightning formation to temper his soul, and the effects had been considerable. Since he had obtained the Lightning Elemental Orb, the very core of the lightning formation, and he had some time on his hands, it was a good opportunity for him to cultivate and advance his soul cultivation.

Gazing at the condensed lightning packed into the orb, Zhang Xuan grasped the orb tightly with his soul before driving the Heaven's Path Soul Art.

Tzzzzzzzzzzzz!

Streak after streak of lightning began surging out from the Lightning Elemental Orb and into his soul, tempering it.

An hour later, his soul compressed down from seven meters to six meters, and his soul cultivation advanced up to Nascent Saint intermediate stage.

Two hours later, his soul was compressed down to five meters, and his soul cultivation had reached Nascent Saint advanced stage.



Four hours later, his soul was four meters, and his soul cultivation was at Nascent Saint pinnacle!

While his soul had grown smaller, the soul energy within was purer than ever. On top of that, it was imbued with the Power of Lightning, giving it an incredibly powerful presence.

With just his soul cultivation alone, he could probably defeat a Saint 2-dan pinnacle expert.

My soul, body, and zhenqi cultivation have reached Nascent Saint pinnacle.

After cultivating for a while longer, Zhang Xuan realized that if he were to continue tempering his soul without any subsequent cultivation technique, he could very well face unexpected problems in his soul cultivation. Thus, he returned his soul back to his body, and a satisfied smile appeared on his face.

Within less than a single day after entering the ancient domain, he had managed to raise his physical body cultivation and soul cultivation to Nascent Saint pinnacle. This expedition had truly been a fruitful one for him.

If it had been anywhere else, who knew how long it would have taken him to achieve this feat?

"Here, the Lightning Elemental Orb is an extremely powerful artifact for cultivating one's soul. You should cultivate a bit as well!" After advancing his soul cultivation, Zhang Xuan tossed the Lightning Elemental Orb to his clone before leaving the Anthive Nest and returning back to the expedition team.

After a period of rest, the expedition members had mostly recovered from their wounds, and they exuded an aura of vigor.

"Let's continue our journey!" Wu shi said, and the expedition team swiftly got up and began making their way forward.

The route ahead of them mainly consisted of a barren plain.

After walking some distance, Wu Shi suddenly came to a halt. He turned to the young man beside him and asked, "Principal Zhang, does this look familiar to you?"

As he said those words, he pointed to the area just ahead of him.

Embedded in the ground was a sword. Forcefully snapped by something, only the top half of it was left.

Taking a closer look at the surroundings, there were some marks of battle around them. Some parts were buried under a layer of dirt, but it was still easily discernible.

"No, I don't think I have seen it before..." Taking a look at it, Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Just like the Glacier Rain Sword, the sword pierced in the ground had reached Half Saint as well. However, its appearance was unfamiliar to Zhang Xuan, and he was certain that he had never seen it before.

Wo Tianqiong walked over and remarked, "That is Zhang Yinqiu's weapon. He used it once in a duel with me."

As the principal of the Yunxu Master Teacher Academy, he had rather close ties with the old principal, and they had often met one another. As such, he was well aware of the weapons in the old principal's possession.

"It belongs to the old principal?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

"Yes, that's definitely his weapon!" Wu Ran and Shen Pingchao stepped forward and nodded in agreement.

"Since the old principal's weapon has fallen it, it means that his expedition team must have walked down this route as well... Let's move on!"

The eyes of the crowd lit up in excitement.

This was the first time that they had found traces of the old principal after entering the ancient domain, and they could not

help but feel a little agitated within.

They hastened their footsteps, but it did not take long before they stopped once more.

Ahead of them was a massive sandstorm. What was particularly eerie about it was that the sandstorm was pitch-black. Without even approaching it, the crowd could not help but feel shivers running down their spines.

"What's that?"

"I have no idea either..."

Even though they did not recognize what the black sandstorm ahead of them was, they could feel the sheer power that was harnessed within it, and it left them feeling deeply apprehensive.

After a moment of silence, Wo Tianqiong suddenly spoke up with an awful look on his face. "That is the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion!"

The crowd frowned in confusion. "Black Sandstorm of Oblivion?"

"Un. It is an extremely dangerous sandstorm that possesses extraordinarily potent corrosion capability. Any existence that steps into it will be swiftly reduced into nothing." After a moment of hesitation, Wo Tianqiong continued. "If you don't believe me, take a look at this..."

After saying those words, he whipped out a Spirit pinnacle sword and tossed it into the sandstorm.

Tzzzzzz!

As soon as the sword was tossed into the sandstorm, innumerable black spots appeared on it, as if it was rusty from being soaked in rainwater for many days.

After which, with a swift wave of his hand, Wo Tianqiong retrieved the sword with his zhenqi. He flicked on it lightly.

Kacha!

The incomparably sturdy Spirit pinnacle sword immediately shattered into innumerable pieces.

"This..."

The faces of the crowd distorted in horror.

Spirit pinnacle weapons were rare even among Tier-1 Empire, and yet, it did not even survive more than a few breaths within the sandstorm before being torn to pieces. Wasn't the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion a little too frightening?

"Is there any way that we can bypass this sandstorm?" one of the combat masters asked with a frown.

Guild Leader Han took a closer look at the sandstorm, and he shook his head bitterly. "I'm afraid that is impossible..."

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# Chapter 1055: Luo Ruoxin's Suggestion

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"Impossible?"

The crowd turned their gazes over.

"Since the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion stands in our path, it is likely that it is a trial that we are supposed undergo. If we do not clear this, we will only be able to loiter around the outskirts of the ancient domain, unable to enter its depths," said Guild Leader Han.

"Un." Hearing his words, Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

That was indeed the case.

Through the past experiences, he had come to realize that the ancient domain was built in a way such that only one who had cleared the trial before them could activate the formation that led to the next level. If there was no one among them who could clear the trial, they would be stuck on the spot.

As that was the fundamental design of the ancient domain, there was no way to circumvent the trials through wits.

Not to mention, the person who had designed the ancient domain was most likely Ancient Sage Qiu Wu himself. How could an expert of his caliber possibly leave behind any openings that they would be able to exploit?

Taking a step back, even if there was truly an opening they found that they could exploit, it was more likely that it would be a trap created by Ancient Sage Qiu Wu. For breaking his rules, they might find themselves being placed through an even harsher trial than the one before them.

"Based on the traces, it is certain that Zhang Yinqiu and the others must have stepped through the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion as well. But... how did they do it?" Wu shi surveyed the surroundings for a moment before frowning deeply.

Since the old principal's sword had been found alongside marks of battle in the vicinity, it was apparent that the old principal's expedition team had passed through the area they were in.

But the sandstorm before them was a terrifying existence that could corrode even Spirit pinnacle weapons! How could any cultivators survive within it? Even if one could withstand the sandstorm for a short moment, who could say for sure how far the sandstorm spanned? No matter how he looked at it, it seemed like it was nigh impossible to clear this trial!

Paying no heed to the anxiety of the crowd, Zhang Xuan began assessing the sandstorm before him carefully as well.

The Black Sandstorm of Oblivion was similar to the field of lightning that he had encountered before—it was a formation as well. However, just like before, as the area it spanned was simply too big and his cultivation was too low, he was unable to break the formation even with the knowledge of its flaws.

A moment later, he shook his head helplessly as well.

The conclusion that he had come to was the same as Guild Leader Han's. There was no way for them to advance forward other than to brave through the black sandstorm!

While the crowd were conflicted and distressed over their present circumstances, Luo Ruoxin suddenly spoke up.

"Have you all thought about how we encountered quite a few Otherworldly Demons in the previous trial, but here, there is not a single one to be seen? If my conjecture holds true, we could have been heading in the wrong direction all along."

"We have been heading in the wrong direction all along?" asked one of the master teachers, unable to comprehend what Luo Ruoxin was driving at.

"That's right. We have been chasing after the trial left behind by Old Principal Zhang Yinqiu, but... if the Otherworldly Demons are

already ahead of us, the trail that we see before us might not necessarily be authentic. If that's the case, shouldn't we search for the Otherworldly Demon's trail instead? There is a good chance that it will be safer that way." Luo Ruoxin presented her analysis.

"That..." The crowd was taken aback by those words.

"Indeed, Luo shi's words make perfect sense!" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

As one of the central goals of their expedition was to find the whereabouts of the old principal and save the other party if he was still alive, they had been on the lookout for the old principal's trail all along, thinking that it would lead them to the old principal. It was a logical deduction, but if the Otherworldly Demons had intentionally scattered the old principal's possessions around to lay a trap for them... they could very well have been headed toward grave danger!

So far, he had managed to tame one and kill seven of the Ten Great Kings of Qingtian Lineage, but the two remaining Upper Five Kings would be far more difficult to defeat. Even though he had missed the most powerful Skyleaf King at the Poison Hall, he had heard that the latter was a true Leaving Aperture realm expert, an existence beyond their current means to deal with.

Typically speaking, after obtaining the map in the Poison Hall, the Skyleaf King should have entered the ancient domain. Yet, he hadn't seen any trace of the other party ever since he entered the ancient domain.

Considering how the Skyleaf King could have dealt with them easily but had yet to do so... Perhaps, by using the map in his hand, the other party had managed to enter the ancient domain before them and was currently ahead of them.

If so, the path that the other party had taken was bound to be the safest!

"Let me take a look..."

Flying into the air, Zhang Xuan began assessing his surroundings carefully with his Eye of Insight.

Previously, he had been too concerned with finding the old principal's trail, so he had not noticed anything else. However, taking a closer look around them, he swiftly found that there were indeed quite a few suspicious details.

A group of Otherworldly Demons had passed through the land they were currently on just a few hours ago.

Zhang Xuan descended to the ground and requested, "Feng Xun, I need to borrow your Undeiled Mirror!"

The Otherworldly Demons had intentionally concealed their trail, and due to his lower cultivation, there was a limit to what his Eye of Insight could see as well. He could barely make out that others had passed through the area a few hours ago, but he could not discern for sure the direction they were headed in.

If it was just a few hours, the Undeiled Mirror of the Combat Master Hall should still be able to work its wonders.

"Un." Nodding, Feng Xun passed the mirror over and swiftly filled Zhang Xuan in on how the mirror should be utilized.

Following Feng Xun's instructions, Zhang Xuan bit his finger and dripped a droplet of blood on the Undeiled Mirror.

Weng!

An arrow surfaced in the Undeiled Mirror, and after flickering for a brief moment, it pointed toward a certain direction.

After walking in the direction pointed out by the Undeiled Mirror for some time, Zhang Xuan suddenly came to a halt. Turning to face the crowd behind him, he said, "The direction pointed out by the Undeiled Mirror indicates that they have entered the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion through here."



"They entered through here? Are they unafraid of the might of the sandstorm?" one of the combat masters asked in bewilderment.

"I don't have an answer to that either." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Through the Undefined Mirror, they could confirm that the Otherworldly Demons did enter the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion through the area.

But after careful examination, Zhang Xuan discerned that the area before him wasn't a location where a flaw of the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion could be found. The sandstorm was still as fearsome as ever, so it was perplexing to him why the Otherworldly Demons would choose to enter from this point.

At that moment, Wu shi stepped forward and said, "Let me give it a try. Perhaps, there might be a hidden passageway amid the fearsome sandstorm."

Guild Leader Han pondered for a moment before nodding in agreement to Wu shi's decision. "Be careful."

What Wu shi had suggested was something that often occurred within formations.

There were many formations where the Life Gate was hidden in the most perilous of locations, unable to be detected through any means except by stepping into it personally.

"Un." Wu shi nodded. Taking a deep breath, he drove his zhenqi, and silver armor gradually materialized around him.

Saint-tier battle technique, Silver Armor of the True Dragon!

It was his strongest defense battle technique, and it granted him an all-around defense as well. As such, it was the ideal shield to fend off the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion.

He took a step in.

Kacha! Kacha! Kacha!

As soon as he stepped into sandstorm, a deafening ruckus reminiscent of a violent storm mercilessly battering a banana tree filled the air.

Barely after taking eight steps forward, Wu Shi's face paled, and he hurriedly rushed back out. As soon as he left the perimeter of the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion, his zhenqi armor immediately cracked before dissipating entirely. His face was entirely pale, and his footsteps were unstable. He hurriedly sat down to condition himself.

After a moment of recuperation, Wu Shi turned to the crowd and shook his head. "This won't work at all. Not only is the sandstorm no weaker than where we were previously, it is even stronger! There is no way we can pass through this."

The amount of zhenqi one had to exert to fend off the sandstorm was immense. He could at least enter forty meters deep into the lava, but here, eight steps were already his limit.

"This is bizarre. How did the Otherworldly Demon manage to get in unharmed?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

Even if the Skyleaf King and the Scarletleaf King were the two strongest experts of the Ten Great Kings, surely it should have been beyond their means to step right into the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion without getting injured?

It did not make any sense!

"Perhaps... they used some kind of artifact to ward off the sandstorm!" Guild Leader Han suggested.

"Artifact?"

"Un. As powerful as the sandstorm is, there are still artifacts out there that can fend it off. For one, if we had a Saint high-tier artifact here with us right now, we would be able to run right in without any fear of getting injured," Guild Leader Han said.

The Black Sandstorm of Oblivion was a terrifying existence

against Spirit pinnacle and even Saint low-tier artifacts, but even it could do nothing to faze the powerful Saint high-tier artifacts.

If they had an artifact of that caliber, they would not have needed to bother with finding the Life Gate of the formation at all. They could easily have run right through the sandstorm.

"Saint high-tier artifact... Where are we supposed to find that?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

Despite going through a flawless reforging session, the Golden Origin Cauldron barely met the mark as a Saint intermediate-tier weapon. Given so, it was not too hard to imagine how difficult smithing a Saint high-tier artifact would be. In fact, it could be said that it was an impossible feat for anyone who had not achieved the proficiency equivalent to an 8-star blacksmith!

Luo Ruoxin examined the situation for a moment before saying calmly, "Actually, aside from Saint high-tier artifacts, there are some unique artifacts that might work particularly well against the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion as well. Considering how the sandstorm carries the property of corrosion, it would be hard for most physical artifact to withstand its might. However, it would be a different story for soul-type artifacts. Souls are impervious to the corruption caused by the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion, so through the soul energy that soul-type artifacts emanate, it should be possible to keep the sandstorm at bay."

As one who could very well be the offspring of a Sage Clan, it was not surprising for her to be well-versed in such knowledge.

"Soul-type artifacts? But such artifacts are harder to find than Saint high-tier artifacts," a combat master remarked.

As long as a decently proficient blacksmith had sufficient materials at hand, smithing a Saint high-tier artifact would not be a problem. However, the same could not be said about a soul-type artifact.

Most of the soul-type artifacts in circulation were formed by the workings of nature due to the immense difficulty in smithing them. In fact, blacksmiths who were capable of smithing soul-type artifacts possessed an extremely high standing in society, comparable to an equivalently ranked master teacher or even above that.

"Indeed! It's simply too difficult to find soul-type artifacts. We don't even have a single one of those in our Qingyuan Conferred Empire Master Teacher Pavilion!"

"The same for our Yunxu Master Teacher Academy as well..."

The crowd nodded in agreement.

Even if soul-type artifacts could really be used to fend against the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion, it was still futile if they did not have one in their possession.

"I heard that the Hongyuan royal family has a soul-type plant known as the Bodhi Saint Tree. If only I knew that we would encounter such a trial in the ancient domain, I would have surely borrowed it from them in advance." Mu shi sighed deeply in lamentation.

"How could we have possibly known that there would be so many peculiar formations in the ancient domain?" Wu shi shook his head.

"Actually, that probably wouldn't have worked either. I've heard that the Hongyuan royal family's Bodhi Saint Tree is dying, so it probably wouldn't be strong enough to ward off the sandstorm either. Besides, it's the very foundation of the strength of their royal family, so there's no way that they would have willingly lent it to us," Wo Tianqiong said.

"Indeed. How could they be willing to lend us something that directly concerns the survival of their monarchy? Unless we were to snatch it forcefully or offer them something equivalent in value

to it, there is no way that it would have worked!"

Before the group could finish letting out their regrets, Zhang Xuan suddenly spoke with a dazed look on his face. "What did you say? The Bodhi Saint Tree would work as well?"

"Of course! While it's not a soul-type artifact, it's still a soul-type plant. Naturally, it will still emanate soul energy, thus helping us fend off the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion!" Guild Leader Han replied. He was just about to continue speaking when the young man before him suddenly flicked his hand, and a giant tree appeared on his palm. "Will this work?"

"That is... a whole Bodhi Saint Tree?"

The crowd was dumbfounded.

"Principal Zhang, did you... ransack the Hongyuan royal family?"

# Chapter 1056: Trap

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Anyone who had visited Hongyuan City in the past would know the significance of the Bodhi Saint Tree to the Hongyuan royal family. It was the very foundation of the Yu Clan's rule. As such, they were reluctant to allow anyone to come close to it, let alone borrow it.

Given so, it was no wonder their thoughts would wander when they saw Zhang Xuan taking out an entire Bodhi Saint Tree with a casual flick of the wrist.

"Of course not! I planted the tree myself..." Not expecting the crowd to have such wild imaginations, Zhang Xuan was at a loss for words.

Naturally, the Bodhi Saint Tree in his hand was not the one from the royal palace but one that he had nurtured himself through the Bodhi Seed. He had been cultivating it in his Myriad Anthive Nest all along, and he was just retrieving it from there.

After hearing that Zhang Xuan did not forcefully snatch the Bodhi Saint Tree, the crowd heaved a sigh of relief. They were afraid that this would cause a conflict between the Master Teacher Pavilion and the Hongyuan royal family.

After the initial shock, a wave of excitement gradually spread across the crowd as they realized that they might have found the key to crossing the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion.

Wu shi stepped forward and said, "Let me give it a try and see if it's effective."

So far, it was still nothing but a hypothesis that a soul-type artifact would be able to fend off the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion. It still required some testing to confirm whether it would work or not.

Wu shi took the Bodhi Saint Tree from Zhang Xuan's hand, and

driving his zhenqi, he propped the massive tree up and held it over his head. After which, he infused a surge of soul energy into the tree trunk, and the tree swiftly emanated a warm and comfortable glow.

The Bodhi Saint Tree did not just have the ability to nourish souls. It could also draw forth a peculiar strength if one infused one's soul energy into it.

After the preparations were done, Wu shi began making his way toward the black sandstorm.

Under the embrace of the warm glow of the tree, Wu shi stepped into the violent black sandstorm. This time, he was not battered by the sandstorm. The warm glow had neutralized the sandstorm that was heading his way. What Luo Ruoxin had said was true, soul-type artifacts were indeed effective against the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion!

"This is wonderful!"

"The Otherworldly Demons must have prepared a soul-type artifact in advance knowing that there was such a trial, thus allowing them to walk straight through the sandstorm without any trouble."

"With this, we will be able to pass through the sandstorm easily as well."

The eyes of the crowd lit up at that sight.

At the same time, a mystery that had been plaguing Zhang Xuan's mind suddenly unraveled before his eyes.

He had been wondering why the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe would go to the trouble of instructing You Xu to poison the Hongyuan royal family's Bodhi Saint Tree. Back then, it seemed like an excessive action—it was not like the Hongyuan Empire posed a significant threat to them. However, from the looks of it now... it seemed that they were just taking precautions.

As long as the Bodhi Saint Tree died, the master teachers would be helpless before the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion. They would be left standing helplessly at the starting line, lamenting their helplessness.

However, despite all of their calculations, they had failed to factor in Zhang Xuan's involvement. Who would have thought that someone would actually succeed in reviving the Bodhi Saint Tree and obtain the Bodhi Seed? Not to mention, to cultivate the Bodhi Seed into the mature Bodhi Saint Tree within such a short period of time...

Somehow, the aid that he had provided to the royal family back then ended up helping him in this crucial moment.

While he was deep in thought, Wu shi had finally returned from the black sandstorm.

At this moment, he did not look as excited as the others did. With a pale face, he placed the Bodhi Saint Tree back down onto the ground. Facing the crowd with a bitter smile, he said, "Infusing soul energy into the Bodhi Saint Tree does allow us to fend off the sandstorm, and the area of effect of the glow is sufficient for all of us to pass through simultaneously... However, this depletes soul energy simply far too quickly. Even with my current strength, I can only progress around a hundred meters before being sapped dry."

"A hundred meters?"

The crowd frowned.

From the looks of it, the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion covered at least several kilometers. As a Primordial Spirit realm pinnacle expert, Wu shi possessed the strongest soul of their expedition team. If even he only had sufficient soul energy to fuel the Bodhi Saint Tree to travel a hundred meters, there was no way they would be able to get to the other side.



It was not easy for a member of their expedition team to possess a soul-type plant, and they had also verified that it was effective against the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion. Were they really going to stumble here just because they did not have sufficient soul energy to push on?

"Let me give it a try..." Zhang Xuan took the Bodhi Saint Tree and propped it up above him. After which, he sent a surge of rich spiritual energy into it.

After roughly gauging the rate of depletion of his soul energy, Zhang Xuan smiled and said, "Everyone, gather under the tree. Make sure not to wander off!"

Right after saying those words, he began making his way toward the black sandstorm.

The crowd glanced at one another with conflicted expressions, but considering how confident Zhang Xuan was, they swiftly made up their minds and followed suit.

As soon as they stepped in, they could feel the calamitous power of the black sandstorm sweeping toward them, desiring to devour their existences whole. But when it came into contact with the warm glow of the Bodhi Saint Tree, the black sandstorm seemed to dissipate with a flicker.

Seeing that the sandstorm was unable to make its way through the Bodhi Saint Tree's defenses, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief before proceeding forward.

Due to the intangible nature of souls, it was often viewed a far less effective defensive means as compared to utilizing one's zhenqi or physical body. Yet, to think that it would be the key to fending off the devastating sandstorm before their eyes... A cyclical balance of power, the world sure worked in wondrous ways.

As Zhang Xuan marched forward, he discreetly sneaked a peek at the young lady not too far away from him. Luo shi seems a little

too knowledgeable... Is she really just a 6-star master teacher?

Be it seeing through the Spatial Formation or figuring out that soul-type artifacts could fend off the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion, those were things that even Wu Shi and Guild Leader Han were ignorant of! And yet, Luo Ruoxin seemed well-versed in such matters. The depth and breadth of her knowledge was truly astonishing.

Is this the capability that the offspring of Sage Clans wield? If that is truly the case, it was the right call to have Yuan Tao return to his clan, Zhang Xuan thought.

He had been a little reluctant to part with Yuan Tao back then, but it seemed like that was for the best. Not only would the latter be able to awaken his Emperor's Bloodline swiftly, his fighting prowess would also rocket.

Under the protection of the Bodhi Saint Tree, the crowd advanced steadily without any worries. However, after walking for some time, they gradually noticed that something was amiss, and shocked gazes were beginning to gather upon the young man before them.

So far... they should have already traveled around three hundred meters? And yet, the fellow before them did not seem to be exhausted in the least. In fact, he even had the leisure to allow his mind to wander, not even slightly strained by his exertion. Weren't the reserves of his soul energy a little too big?

This was especially so for Wu Shi. At this point, his lower jaw was already on the verge of falling to the ground.

He had personally experienced the fearsome power of the black sandstorm himself, and it had caused his soul energy to deplete even before he could get far. On the other hand, Principal Zhang had extended his glow to cover everyone—a significantly larger rate of depletion as compared to his—and they had already traveled for more than three hundred meters now, and yet, the

other party did not seem fatigued in the slightest.

It was truly hard for him to believe that a Nascent Saint possessed even greater soul energy than a Saint 4-dan expert.

That fellow is a true monster, Wu shi thought bitterly.

To think that he had intended to leave such a formidable figure out of their expedition team at one point in time... Now that he thought of it, he could not help but feel deeply ashamed of his ignorance then.

It was fortunate that he had eventually chosen to bring the other party along, or else they probably wouldn't even have passed the lava at the very start, let alone reach this point.

If I can only persist till a hundred meters, even if he's blessed with an innately powerful soul, five hundred meters should be his limit.

Thus, as they advanced forward, Wu shi kept a close eye on the young man before him, prepared to make a substitution should the latter run out of strength. Yet, they trod past the five hundred meters mark, and there were still no signs of exhaustion on the Zhang Xuan's face. It seemed as if the depletion of his soul energy that he had incurred so far was not even worth mentioning!

600 meters!

800 meters!

1,000 meters!

It did not take too long for them to travel a whole 5,000 meters. Walking at the very front, Zhang Xuan still had the same nonchalant expression on his face, as if the depletion of his soul energy was insignificant. Not only so, his footsteps also seemed to be getting lighter and lighter...

Wait a moment, h-he... he can't be cultivating while walking, can he? Wu shi eyes nearly bulged out from his eyes.

A rate of depletion that even he was unable to withstand, and yet, the other party could easily bear it and even cultivate while he was at it. Monster! That freaking monster!

Forget it. If I continue comparing myself with him, it is just a matter of time before I die of despondency. Consoling himself that the young man before him was an anomaly, Wu shi was finally able to soothe the turmoil in his heart.

With Zhang Xuan's seemingly endless supply of soul energy, the end of the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion was soon in sight. There, a beautiful and resplendent manor reminiscent of a celestial palace could be seen. Floating before an enormous waterfall, it left the crowd feeling as if they were stepping into a heavenly realm.

"How is that done?" Feng Xun widened his eyes in disbelief.

A cultivator had to reach Saint realm before they could free themselves from the shackles of gravity and soar in the sky. Yet, for an entire palace to be floating in midair, creating such a mystical and wondrous sight... Just how powerful was the person who had achieved such a feat?

This was too exaggerated!

After a moment of pondering, Guild Leader Han said, "It is a clever manipulation of space. Even though it seems like it is floating in midair to our eyes, its true form could be something very different from that."

Hearing those words, the crowd slowly nodded.

Limited by their experiences and knowledge, it was extremely difficult for them to comprehend advanced formations. What seemed bewildering and inconceivable to them could very well be realized at a higher level.

"This is probably the core of the ancient domain. Let's hurry over to take a look!" Wo Tianqiong said with a gladdened smile.

They had overcome numerous trials in order to reach that point.

Surely, they should have been nearing the end by now.

"Alright!"

The spirited crowd quickly made their way over to the celestial palace.

Not too long later, a massive heavenly gate that carried an air of divinity appeared before their eyes. Stepping through it, they immediately felt rich spiritual energy gushing in their direction.

Stepping into the celestial palace, Zhang Xuan frowned doubtfully. "Why do I feel like there is something peculiar about this place?"

While the entire building was shrouded in an air of divinity, Zhang Xuan could not help but feel that there was something off with the place.

"Peculiar? Principal Zhang, it must be your imagination this time around..." Laughing heartily, Wu shi was just about to continue speaking when the ground abruptly jolted beneath them.

In an instant, the resplendent celestial palace seemed to have suddenly turned into a living hell. An air of desolation swiftly permeated the area.

Sou sou sou!

An overwhelming aura of maliciousness swept across their surroundings like a raging storm. Following which, surge after surge of sword qi burst forth, weaving a huge net that left them trapped like insects in a cage.

Wu shi's eyes narrowed as he hurriedly bellowed, "Damn it, it's a formation trap by the Otherworldly Demons!"

Only the Otherworldly Demons could possibly release such a sharp and cold aura of maliciousness!

Peng peng peng peng!

In the next moment, three Nascent Saint combat masters were

sliced into pieces under a simultaneous burst of sword qi. Even Feng Xun's shoulder was wounded by the sword qi, causing a stream of crimson blood to flow down his arm.

The formation had changed so swiftly that there were already casualties even before they could process what was going on. Swiftly recovering from his daze, Guild Leader Han quickly roared, with veins popping from his temples, "Defense!"

"Yes!"

In that instant, they all realized that they had fallen into a trap laid by the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. They swiftly drew their weapons and drove their zhenqi.

Ding ding ding ding!

No matter what, their expedition team was still made up of elite master teachers and combat masters. Even though they had been caught off guard, the fighting prowess they wielded as a whole was still spectacular once they got back on track.

With their collective might, the sword qi aimed toward them was easily deflected away.

"To be able to come here so quickly, I must say that you are not too bad. However, I'm afraid that this place will be your burial ground..."

At this moment, a cold and eerie voice sounded in the air.

Following which, the horrified voice of the Violetleaf King sounded in Zhang Xuan's ears.

"Scarletleaf King..."

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# Chapter 1057: Illusory-Slaughter Formation

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"Scarletleaf King? The one who is ranked second of the Upper Five Kings?" Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes warily.

Having witnessed the power wielded by the Jadeleaf King and the Stoneleaf King, Zhang Xuan had been feeling a little apprehensive about facing the two strongest experts of the Upper Five Kings. Who knew that he would meet one of them in such a situation?

"Who are you? Stop putting up a farce and get out here!"

While Zhang Xuan was communicating with the Violetleaf King, Wu shi scanned the surroundings with sharp eyes reminiscent of a hawk. In the next moment, seemingly having confirmed the location of the enemy, his eyebrows shot up and the sword in his hand flew forth amidst a resounding battle cry.

Huala!

A powerful blast of sword qi burst forward with swiftness reminiscent of a shooting star, tearing a vacuum through the air. Upon coming into contact with the wall, it immediately ripped out a massive hole.

"Strong!"

This was the first time Zhang Xuan was seeing Wu shi fight for real, and the fighting prowess that the latter wielded was indeed formidable.

Along the route, the 7-star high-tier master teacher had either been injured or was on the way to becoming injured, leaving Zhang Xuan with a notion that the other party was unworthy of his rank. However, the astounding might that the other party wielded in this very moment dispelled whatever doubts he harbored regarding the other party.

It still couldn't match up to the Primordial Spirit Jadeleaf King, but it was definitely on par with the Stoneleaf King.

If both were to clash with one another at full strength, there was no saying who would emerge victorious!

Boom!

Upon striking through the wall, the sword qi abruptly exploded, causing the building in front of them to collapse entirely, raising a huge cloud of dust. However, there was not a figure to be seen.

"There's no one there?"

Not expecting that he would make a lapse in his judgement, Wu shi's face darkened as he hurriedly scanned his surroundings once more warily.

"Hahaha, you wish to challenge me? You are still far too young for that!" that voice sounded once more.

Huala!

Halfway through those words, Wu shi had already made a move once more.

This time, his movement was even swifter. His sword blurred into a series of afterimages as it crept past several hundred meters in just the blink of an eye before being brought down powerfully. BAM! As if slicing through tofu, a giant tear ripped its way through the buildings, parting the area into two distinct halves.

However, just like before, there was still not a single silhouette to be seen. It was as if the person who had just spoken didn't exist at all.

"Don't waste your efforts. Even if you were to tear the whole place down, you still won't be able to find me!" the Scarletleaf King laughed heartily upon seeing Wu shi's futile struggling.

Hu!

Right after saying those words, the collapsed buildings abruptly joined back together with one another, as if time had been rewound. In the blink of an eye, it was already reverted back to its



original state.

"T-this... How can this be possible?"

The eyes of the crowd narrowed in disbelief at the ridiculous sight before them.

With their own eyes, they had seen how the powerful might of Wu shi devastated the buildings. How could they possibly recover in the blink of an eye?

Furthermore, it was a perfect recovery. The buildings had been reverted to the form identical to how they were in when they first entered!

"We must have stepped into some kind of powerful formation..." Wu shi remarked warily.

The crowd nodded.

"Could we be in an Illusory Formation?" Wo Tianqiong asked.

He had taken formation master as one of his supporting occupations as well, but the sight before his eyes was simply too bizarre. It was difficult for even him to confirm what was going on.

"Yes, we should be in an Illusory Formation." Guild Leader Han nodded. "Most probably, we have already succumbed to it when we first entered. In other words, everything that is before us in this instant is fake! It won't make any difference no matter how we attack them!"

"It won't make any difference?"

"Un. Think about it this way. No matter whether those buildings are collapsed or standing, they are still part of an illusion, so it wouldn't make any difference to the current plight we are in. As long as we are unable to see through the essence of the formation, we will be stuck in this illusion forever, unable to escape..." Guild Leader Han explained with his fists clenched tightly in nervousness.

"This..."

Hearing those words, the bodies of the crowd tensed up.

If they were truly in an Illusory Formation, wasn't the image before them a little too realistic? They could be considered as elites amongst the master teachers and combat masters, and every single one of them possessed superior eyes of discernment. Yet, for none of them to be unable to discern that they had fallen into an illusion before... Just the thought of it left chills running down their spines.

Was this the strength that advanced formations wielded?

It was already extremely difficult for them to escape from a realistic Illusory Formation, but to make things worse, it seemed like it was under someone else's control... Would they really still be able to escape from it?

"This..." Zhang Xuan's face turned grim as well.

He did notice that there was something amiss when he first stepped into the celestial palace, but even he hadn't noticed that they were in an illusion!

With a thought, he activated his Eye of Insight and scanned his surroundings. However, the buildings around him still looked the same as ever, there was no difference from before.

All of these buildings... are real? Does that mean that we aren't in an Illusory Formation? Zhang Xuan was bewildered by the conflicting conclusions before him.

The Eye of Insight could see right into the crux of anything. If they were truly in an Illusory Formation, he should be able to see through it via the Eye of Insight easily! How could he have not sensed anything at all?

No, that's not right. Perhaps the formation is too advanced for me at the moment. Due to my low cultivation, I am still unable to see through it via my Eye of Insight... Zhang Xuan reasoned.

The Eye of Insight was indeed powerful, but it was limited by his own cultivation. He couldn't see through anything that was too far beyond him. Take for example, if an 8-star master teacher were to walk past him disguised as a passer-by, he wouldn't be any wiser even if he were to scan the other party with his Eye of Insight.

This seemed to be the case for the Illusory Formation as well.

Most likely, it is a massive formation like the lightning formation and the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion! Zhang Xuan thought.

Larger formations were not only more powerful, it also made it more difficult for others to analyze and discern it as well due to the sheer scale of it. It was probably because of this that the entire expedition team failed to notice that they had stepped into a formation itself.

Knowing that the formation was beyond the means of his Eye of Insight to analyze, Zhang Xuan deactivated his Eye of Insight. After which, turning his gaze to his surroundings, he muttered silently, "Flaws!"

While the Eye of Insight might be unable to see through the formation around him, it shouldn't pose a problem to the Library of Heaven's Path.

Hu!

With a jolt of his mind, a book appeared in the Library of Heaven's Path.

Zhang Xuan hurriedly immersed his consciousness in and browsed through the book.

"The 172nd Door, a segment of a larger formation. There are eight flaws in total. No.1,..."

After reading through the book, Zhang Xuan's face darkened.

The Library of Heaven's Path was indeed unaffected by the tier of the formation, but... the formation was simply too huge! For one,

the area that they could see was only one small portion of its entirety.

According to the book, it was the 172nd Door, which meant that there should be at least 171 doors identical to the one they were in, or even more!

For there to be so many doors... it would still be fine if they were to step into a Life Gate, but what if they were to accidentally enter a Death Gate? They might just lose their lives before they know it!

The formations that I have encountered so far operated as a whole, so the Library of Heaven's Path compiled a book on the entire formation even when I am just viewing a small portion of it. However, this Illusory Formation seems to be made up of innumerable smaller formations, and these smaller formations can be activated individually. In other words, the formation is only active in areas where it perceives the enemies are at. As such, not even the seemingly omnipotent Library of Heaven's Path is able to discern the entire situation of the formation... Zhang Xuan clenched his fists tightly together as he analyzed the current situation they were in.

The current Illusory Formation they were trapped in was segmented into many doors, and it seemed like only certain portions of the formation were activated at the current moment. As such, the Library of Heaven's Path viewed the current door they were in as a system by itself and analyzed the door only.

If Zhang Xuan wanted the Library of Heaven's Path to analyze the entire formation, he would have to get an overhead view of the entire formation. As long as he remained trapped within it, he would be unable to see through the crux of the Illusory Formation through the Library of Heaven's Path and determine the most suitable path to escaping from it.

In other words... he wouldn't be able to bank on the Library of Heaven's Path to deal with the current formation he was in unlike

previous occasions!

Hualala!

Just as Zhang Xuan was conflicted over the situation before him, a sound reminiscent of a powerful gust of wind echoed in the surroundings. In the next instant, innumerable sword qi abruptly shot forth from all around them.

As if a rain of arrows from thousands and thousands of soldiers, the burst of sword qi sealed the space around them perfectly. The slightest wrong movement they made could very well result in them being sliced into innumerable pieces.

"Everyone, be careful! This isn't just an Illusory Formation but an Illusory-Slaughter Formation!" Guild Leader Han shouted.

Illusory Formation could only induce hallucinations in the minds of those trapped within it, placing them in a distraught state, so the formation in itself didn't pose a threat to those trapped within it. However, an Illusory-Slaughter Formation was a formation which harnessed the functions of both an Illusory Formation and a Slaughter Formation simultaneously. Not only would one's mind be sent into disarray, one would even have to face all kinds of attacks. If one were to get careless within it, one might just end up losing his life.

"Illusory-Slaughter Formation?"

Everyone's faces turned grim. They swiftly drove their zhenqi, preparing themselves to fend off the wave of sword qi headed towards them.

Zhang Xuan was also about to make a move as well when he heard Feng Xun bellowing at the moment, "Combat masters, the Black Tortoise Sword Formation!"

"Yes!"

The remaining nine combat masters quickly stepped forward before brandishing their words simultaneously with incredible

harmony.

Hualala!

Swiftly, a spherical barrier reminiscent of a tortoise shell formed around the expedition team.

Ding ding ding ding!

Reminiscent of rain pattering down on a gazebo, the sword qi striking the barrier created a deafening reverberation but none was able to bypass its defense.

"What an incredible sword formation!" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in awe upon seeing the sight.

The combat masters weren't too powerful individually, but the synergy in their teamwork was incredible. Their perfect collaboration in the Black Tortoise Sword Formation had allowed them to deflect every single one of the sword qi—a feat which even Zhang Xuan didn't think that he would be able to achieve.

Huala!

After a wave of sword qi, the surroundings abruptly fell silent.

The combat masters withdrew their weapons as they surveyed their surroundings carefully.

"Don't worry, it isn't possible for such attacks to be launched endlessly..." Guild Leader Han said.

It went without saying that each wave of offense would sap the energy reserves within the formation. Without an endless supply of energy, there would eventually come a point where the formation would run out of energy altogether.

Hula!

Right after saying those words, yet another wave of sword qi flew towards them. The combat masters hurriedly put up their formation and deflected the sword qi once more.

Taking the scene into sight, Wu shi frowned. Scanning his surroundings, he declared loudly, "See, your formation is completely useless against us. Why don't you muster the guts to get out here and face me in a proper fight?"

At this moment, they were in the open whereas their enemy was hidden in the dark. It was an extremely disadvantageous position for them. If they could lure the enemy out of his hiding spot, regardless of whether they would be able to kill the other party or not, it could at least lessen the dangers they would face.

"You want me to face you in a proper fight? Hahaha! Sure, escape from here and I will fight you all you want!" the voice burst into laughter, not falling for Wu shi's provocation at all.

Hu!

The air abruptly tensed up, and yet another wave of offense flew towards the expedition team. This time, it wasn't sword qi but saber qi.

Saber qi possessing less penetrative powerful than sword qi, but it harnessed far greater might. Under the furious assault of saber qi, the expedition team found their arms numbing from the powerful impact.

However, the Black Tortoise Sword Formation set up by the combat masters was truly a force to be reckoned with. Once again, it successfully stood its ground against the wave of offense.

After three consecutive waves of saber qi, the surroundings fell silent once more. A short moment later, a leisurely zither melody began sounding in the surroundings. The sound didn't just linger by their ears, it seemed to resonate with their souls as well.

"This is... demonic tune!"

The faces of the expedition team warped in horror.

They had also faced a demonic tune attack back at the Unbounded World, and they were nearly wiped out due to it. It

was even worse this time around. They were already in a perilous position, and if they were to fall into a trance under the effects of the demonic tunes, they might just very well lose their lives here.

"What do we do?"

The crowd immediately sealed their six senses, but they found that they were unable to isolate the sound at all. Horrified, their faces paled in anxiety.

Under such circumstances, a demonic tune attack was indeed far more effective than a physical attack.

"AHHHH... I CAN'T HOLD ON ANYMORE..."

Suddenly, a combat master let loose a ferocious roar before abruptly charging forward. He began hacking the sword in his hand around him frenziedly, as if possessed.

"Hu Chen!"

Upon seeing the combat master abruptly rushing out of the formation, Feng Xun immediately roared in alarm. He hurriedly rushed out to drag the other party back into the formation, but in that moment, a sound reminiscent of a powerful gust of wind echoed once more.

Hulala!

Innumerable sword qi burst forth, and before Hu Chen could even react, he was already sliced into many pieces, and his corpse fell heavily onto the ground.

Puhe! Puhe!

With Hu Chen missing, a huge opening appeared in the Black Tortoise Formation. Sword qi managed to bypass the formation through the openings and struck the legs of two combat masters. Crimson blood trickled down their legs and dripped to the ground from their feet.

"Everyone, retreat!"



Bellowing loudly, Wu shi stepped forward, and with a powerful slash, he eradicated all of the sword qi in the surroundings. After that was done, he turned back to the crowd and said, "Hurry up and treat the casualties, we don't have much time!"

"Alright!"

Nodding, Feng Xun quickly rushed up to his wounded subordinates to treat their wounds.

# Chapter 1058: You Are the Skyleaf King (1)

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Right after they were done treating the casualties, the demonic tune sounded once more. This time, the zither sound carried an alluring melody that bewitched one's mind, causing one's thoughts to run amok.

"Damn it, it's a type of Beguilement Tune..." Zhang Xuan's face darkened.

Just like formations, demonic tunes could be classified into many categories, too. Beguilement Tune, Illusory Tune, Heavy Tunes, Cacophonous Tune... Of them, Beguilement Tunes were the most widely feared due to their ability to control the minds of others.

In a sense, it worked in a similar manner to the Impartation of Heaven's Will. If a cultivator succumbed to it, they might very well end up doing something beyond their control... and this included self-harm and suicide!

There had once been a Zither Demon who used such a demonic tune to massacre an entire city. This was also one of the reasons the occupation was given the prefix of 'demonic'.

As a 7-star demonic tunist, Zhang Xuan naturally understood how fearsome such a demonic tune could be. The tune that was currently being played had a particularly alluring quality to it, making it extremely easy for an individual to lose themselves in it.

Once they succumbed to the music, they would be completely oblivious to the happenings around them, making them vulnerable targets. If so, their entire expedition team could very well be wiped out there.

Knowing that there was no time to be wasted, Zhang Xuan swiftly flicked his wrist and whipped out a zither. Driving his zhenqi, his fingers nimbly swiped over the strings.

Dong dong dong!

A powerful sound reminiscent of the chiming of a massive bell or the rumbling of thunder boomed by everyone's ears.

The current situation was different from the one back in the Unbounded World. Zhang Xuan failed to notice the whistling of the wind earlier, and by the time he was aware of the matter, the entire expedition team was already deeply fixated into it. Under that circumstances, given his lacking proficiency in demonic tunes, it was impossible for him to undo its effects with his demonic tunes. If he were to attempt to do so forcefully, it could result in a rebound, inflicting grievous wounds to the others instead.

However, the current situation was that the demonic tune had only started playing a moment ago, and the crowd had not succumbed to it yet. Thus, it was easier for him to deal with it.

As expected, under the loud cacophony, the crowd staggered slightly, and fresh blood spurted from their mouths and noses. They were slightly injured by the rebound between the clash of both tunes, but Zhang Xuan's tune did effectively jolt them back to attention.

"We will die if we remain here. Follow me!" Roaring loudly, Zhang Xuan identified a direction and headed over.

Even though he had no idea where the 172nd Door was located relative to the entire formation, there was one thing certain here. If they remained there, they would only gradually accumulate injuries. Pushed to their limits, they might very well have ended up succumbing like Combat Master Hu Chen earlier, rushing out of the formation in a craze only to be slaughtered by the many burst of sword qi.

No doubt, the other doors were bound to be dangerous as well, but remaining where they were wasn't an option either. It was a risky gamble, but they had no choice but to take it.

Understanding that as well, the crowd followed closely behind

Zhang Xuan. Each grasping a sword tightly in their hands, Wu Shi and Guild Leader Han surveyed their surroundings cautiously, ready to retaliate should they be attacked.

The both of them were Saint 4-dan experts who had already forged their Primordial Spirits. With their prowess, they could easily fend off the barrage of sword qi in moments of crisis.

Ding ding ding ding!

While proceeding forward, another burst of sword qi assaulted the crowd. However, with the two experts moving simultaneously to fend off the offense, the crowd managed to overcome it successfully and leave swiftly.

After crossing two wide corridors, Zhang Xuan took a look around him before frowning. A moment later, he abruptly dashed right into the wall ahead of him.

Just as the crowd was bewildered by Zhang Xuan's sudden action, the wall suddenly collapsed to reveal a huge courtyard.

Walking into the courtyard, the sound of the demonic tunes abruptly vanished, as if they had bypassed the demarcated zone of its area of effect. At the same time, the ferocious onslaught of sword qi stopped as well. It was as if the relentless assault against them had never happened at all.

"The onslaught of the sword qi has vanished, and the zither sound has stopped as well."

"Did we manage to flee from the Illusory-Slaughter Formation?"

Wo Tianqiong and the others could not help but ask with a hint of hope in their voices.

Zhang Xuan shook his head. "That's not it; we are still in the formation. It's just that the formation is divided into many smaller ones, and we have escaped from one into another."

Grade-8 formations were not grade-8 formations for nothing. If it

was that easy to escape from it, he would not have been so helpless before it in the first place.

Not to mention, there was still a Scarletleaf King camping outside the formation, waiting to prey on them.

After learning of the current situation, the expressions of the crowd tensed.

They thought that they might have finally gotten out of danger, but it seemed like they were being too optimistic.

"There's no need to worry. It seems like we have reached a safe zone for the time being." Noting the low morale among the group, Zhang Xuan consoled them with a smile before turning his gaze toward the surroundings.

The courtyard they were in was larger than the previous one, and there was a door in all four directions: north, south, east, and west.

At this moment, the wall that they had crashed through to enter the courtyard had also mended itself as well. Had they not come through it previously, it would have been impossible for them to tell that there was a path beyond the wall as well.

"Where do we go now?"

In any case, they could not return the way they had come, or else they would be compromising their safety.

But of the four doors... which one should they choose?

"Principal Zhang..."

The gazes of the crowd naturally gathered upon Zhang Xuan.

Most of the dangers they had been put through had been resolved by the young man before their eyes, and unknowingly, the expedition team had begun to subconsciously look toward him for support.

"I am not too sure either..." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

The formation in the current area they were in had not been activated yet, so he was unable to form a corresponding book on it in the Library of Heaven's Path. As such, he was also unsure about its flaws and where he should head to.

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan said, "You all wait here for a moment; I will try one of them and see what's on the other side."

For the time being, he should focus his attention on activating the formation so that he could compile a book on it. Just waiting there and praying for something to happen would not work.

"Alright." The crowd nodded.

Zhang Xuan took a deep breath and randomly chose a direction to head to. Just as he was about to head over, 'jiya!', the door before him suddenly began to creak open.

Hula!

As soon as the door opened, a blade of wind abruptly burst forth, slicing the air in two.

Noticing that something was amiss, Wu shi bellowed quickly, "Everyone, duck!"

"It's just a blade of wind; there's no need to worry. I can deal with it easily..." One of the elders of the Yunxu Master Teacher Academy did not think much of it, and with a casual smile, he whipped out a massive axe and aimed it right at the wind blade.

Huala!

With incredible force, the massive axe hacked down upon the blade of wind. To the astonishment of the crowd, the massive axe was sliced apart without posing the slightest bit of hindrance to it. Before the elder could even react, his palm along with his body had already been severed into two.

"What!"

Cold sweat gushed down the bodies of the crowd.

This was especially so for Wo Tianqiong. He nearly fainted on the spot.

Others might have been unaware of it, but he knew full well that the axe wielded by the elder could easily be ranked among the top of Spirit pinnacle weapons. Such a powerful weapon, and yet, it did not even last a split second before the blade of wind.

That was too fearsome!

"The blade of wind doesn't just slice through air, it slices right through space as well," Guild Leader Han exclaimed as he hurriedly ducked down without any hesitation as well.

To the naked eye, it might have seemed like there was nothing special about the blade of wind other than being exceptionally sharp. However, Guild Leader Han had scanned the blade of wind with his Spiritual Perception, and to his shock, he found that his Spiritual Perception was not able to pass through the area where the blade of wind had cut through for a brief instant. In other words, there was a split moment when the space above and below the wind blade had been severed!

Hu!

The blade of wind flew past everyone's head, and the sharp shrill of the air in the moment that it did so left everyone's body covered in goosebumps. Zhang Xuan's body was also completely stiffened, not daring to move at all.

Even though his body had reached the level of a Saint-tier artifact, he had no doubt that he would be unable to stand his ground against such a bizarre blade of wind. All in all, it would still be wiser for him to remain cautious.

Jiya!

Right after the blade of wind flew past them, everyone heaved a sigh of relief. Just when they thought that they had finally

bypassed the danger, the door behind them suddenly creaked open, and another blade of wind swept over at a diagonal angle.

"Drat!"

Just one blade of wind had nearly scared their souls out of them. How were they supposed to deal with two simultaneously?

However, it seemed like their nightmare had just barely begun. The two remaining doors also opened, and yet another two blades of wind burst forth from them at differing angles. It was keenly aimed to seal the path of escape of the crowd.

"This won't do. We might still be able to last in the short-term, but at this rate, it will only be a matter of time before we are killed," Wu shi said anxiously.

Even though they could still dodge the blades of wind by dodging, there was no knowing if each door could send out multiple blades of wind at once.

If so, they could be in a very dangerous position... perhaps even more than the area they were in previously!

"This way!"

Knowing the danger they were in, Zhang Xuan hurriedly found a flaw and took the lead while beckoning the others along.

The crowd immediately followed him.

Not too long later, they arrived at yet another courtyard.

There was a bizarre formation set up in the courtyard as well. However, it wasn't blades of wind but traps this time around. They finally escaped from it after great difficulty, but unfortunately, another master teacher ended up meeting his end there in the process of doing so.

Proceeding ahead, the crowd entered two more courtyards and suffered another two casualties before finally arriving at a relatively smaller courtyard that didn't seem to have any



mechanisms to it for the time being, so they decided to take a momentary breather there. By this point, all of their faces had turned pale, and they were breathing heavily.

It had only been a few minutes since they entered the celestial palace, but four combat masters and four master teachers had already met their ends. This was a casualty greater than what they had suffered from the total of the previous few trials. The crowd could not help but fall silent at that thought.

"It seems like we are only barging from one formation into another. At this rate, we will all die here," Guild Leader Han said with a worried frown.

The crowd nodded in agreement.

There were too many smaller formations within the celestial palace, and the end was nowhere in sight either. At this rate, their numbers would only gradually thin out, and the position they were in would only further worsen.

If each formation they bypassed would result in a death toll of one or two people, considering how there were only around twenty of them left, their expedition team really could end up being annihilated here.

"What do we do?" the crowd asked worriedly.

"The strength of a formation depends on the person controlling it. Otherwise, the prowess that it can exert will be severely limited. The reason we keep encountering danger is very likely due to the Otherworldly Demon from before pulling strings from the shadows. If we can find the Otherworldly Demon and kill him, we should be able to escape from the formation relatively easier!" Guild Leader Han said.

If there was no one driving the formation, this trial would have been somewhat similar to the Unbounded World and the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion. It would still have been dangerous, but the

formations would only have been capable of carrying out routine and predictable tasks. As long as they could get the hang of it, they should have been able to bypass the formations with ease.

"Guild Leader Han is right. What we should aim for at the moment is to slay the Scarletleaf King!" Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

Currently, they were in the open, and the enemy was in the dark. It was obvious that the enemy had been tracking them and activating the regional formation of where they were at any given moment to deal with them.

"Scarletleaf King?" the crowd asked with a frown.

"Un. The voice that spoke to us earlier is ranked second among the Ten Great Kings of Qingtian, and he is known as the Scarletleaf King. In terms of fighting prowess, he is above even the Stoneleaf King!" Zhang Xuan explained.

Wu shi frowned. "I have read records on the Qingtian Lineage; it is a faction of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. They have quite a few experts who are collectively known as the Ten Great Kings. Of them, there are some bestowed with the title of the Five Upper Kings due to the superior strength they wield, and they are namely the Skyleaf King, Scarletleaf King, Jadeleaf King, Stoneleaf King, and Fireleaf King."

As a master teacher of the Qingyuan Master Teacher Pavilion, he had some understanding of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe powers in the region. Every single one of the Ten Great Kings of the Qingtian Lineage possessed astounding power, and none of them were figures who could be dealt with easily.

Right after Wu shi said those words, the eerie voice from before sounded in the air once more.

"Not bad, it seems like you still have some self-awareness... Hehehe!"

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## Chapter 1059: You Are the Skyleaf King (2)

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"Scarletleaf King?" Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes.

"Indeed, it's me. To be able to recognize me by my voice... You are the one who killed those two fools, Stoneleaf King and Jadeleaf King, am I right?" the voice sneered coldly.

In the next moment, Zhang Xuan felt his body tensed up. As if a poisonous viper was eyeing him, his body suddenly jolted in alarm.

It is the pressure from the other party's Primordial Spirit... Zhang Xuan thought as sweat trickled down his cheeks.

It was not even close to the other party's full strength, but it could already vanquish all thought of retaliation in his mind.

Zhang Xuan swiftly drove his Heaven's Path zhenqi, and only then did he feel the pressure alleviating significantly.

Clenching his jaws, he scanned his surroundings and spat, "Indeed. I was the one who killed them. Are you intending to avenge them?"

The Scarletleaf King was truly well-hidden. Even when using the Eye of Insight to scan the area, he found that he was not able to find the slightest clue about the other party's whereabouts.

"Avenge? Why should I? The fact that they were killed by a Nascent Saint in the first place shows that they are not qualified to serve as Kings. Worthless flies like them are better off dead!" the Scarletleaf King sneered coldly.

The Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was cold-blooded by nature. The only thing that tied them together was their allegiance to the Emperors. Other than that, even if their companions were to die before their eyes, they would not be fazed in the slightest.

"Since you were able to kill them so swiftly, such that they didn't even have any time to send a message to us, that goes to show that

you are quite a figure yourself. It would be a pity to kill you so quickly." The Scarletleaf King chuckled. "Why don't we play a game instead?"

"Play a game?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

The others were also bewildered by the Scarletleaf King's sudden proposal.

"Indeed. The rule of the game is simple. Aren't you all trying to escape from this place? I have five clues here, and as long as you can obtain all of them, you will be able to escape from the formation easily and meet with my real self!" the Scarletleaf King said.

"Five clues? Hah, you won't be handing them to us on a silver platter, will you? What is the price?" Zhang Xuan sneered coldly.

"Sharp, it is so much more convenient to negotiate with smart people like you!"

The Scarletleaf King chuckled softly before saying, "The way to obtain the clues is simple. Kill one master teacher, and I will give you the first clue. Kill another two more, and I will give you the second. Kill another three more, and I will give you the third... so on and so forth. So, as long as you kill fifteen master teachers, you will be able to receive all of the clues and escape from the formation safely!"

"You want us to kill our own comrades?" Zhang Xuan's face turned livid.

There were only thirty of them at the start, and eight of them were already dead, so there were only twenty-two of them remaining. If they were to kill another fifteen... their expedition team would be pretty much wiped out!

How vicious!

The expedition team was also exhausted both physically and mentally from stumbling into dangerous formations one after

another. The more time that passed, the more desperate the crowd would become. Perhaps, it might really come to a point where members of the expedition would attempt to kill one another or sacrifice themselves over the matter.

The Scarletleaf King was preying on their weakened minds to turn the expedition team against one another while sitting out on the fight himself. A devious and scheming mind, it wouldn't be easy for them to outmaneuver a person like that.

"Indeed. You are a smart person, so you should know what is best for you in this situation. Even if you reject my offer, it's just a matter of time before all of you are wiped out by the formation. At the very least, if you choose to play along with me, you might still have a chance to meet me and avenge the others!" the Scarletleaf King replied leisurely.

"Despicable!" Hearing those words, the faces of the crowd reddened in anger.

Just as the other party had said, if they continued barging through the formations, it would just be a matter of time before they were killed. Only with the clues would there be a hope for them to escape from the darned formation and avenge their comrades.

"He is trying to create a rift among us! If we do so, what will be the difference between us and the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe? What rights will we have to call ourselves master teachers?" Wu shi bellowed in an attempt to calm the wavering minds.

They were truly in a very disadvantageous position at the moment. With a bleak hope of escaping from the formation themselves, they had to make a decision.

Should they persist with their principles or take the pragmatic way out?

"Right, I forgot to tell you. No matter who does the dirty job, as

long as fifteen people within the expedition team die, I will give you the clues." At this point, the Scarletleaf King burst into a hearty laughter before continuing. "Make your decision quickly! I will give you two hours to decide. Hehehe! I am looking forward to your response..."

The piercing voice by their ears gradually drifted off, as if signifying that the Scarletleaf King had retracted his attention from them.

Wu shi extended his Spiritual Perception to his surroundings before turning back to the crowd and said, "He seems to have left."

"What do we do now?" Wo Tianqiong asked with a conflicted frown.

The others instinctively turned toward Zhang Xuan for directions.

It did not seem like a feasible solution for them to push their way through, but... were they going to start killing one another as the other party demanded?

"Don't listen to the Scarletleaf King's words, his very motive is to turn us against one another. It is even more so in such situations that we have to stand united!" Zhang Xuan surveyed the crowd and spoke forcefully.

"Indeed. Think about it. Even if we survive from killing one another, it will eventually give birth to inner demons deep in our hearts, hindering us from furthering our paths. In the worst-case scenario, the other party might even use it to leverage control over us afterward," Mu shi added.

"To be honest, there isn't much of a chance that we will be able to get out of here alive!" At this point, Wo Tianqiong abruptly interjected into Mu shi's words. "As long as you successfully kill the Scarletleaf King and avenge Elder Feng and the others, we are more than willing to lay down our lives for you!"

"Indeed. From the very start, we knew that we could meet our end in the ancient domain. Since it's only a matter of time before we succumb to the formation, I'd very much rather sacrifice myself so that the rest of you can safely find a way out of here!" Wu Ran said.

"I share the same opinion with the others. Our deaths are nothing, but nothing can be allowed to happen to Principal Zhang and Wu Shi. The both of them are the hopes of our expedition team. Only with them around will we have a chance to escape from here and slay the wretched Scarletleaf King!" Feng Xun nodded.

Those words swiftly won nods of approval from the crowd.

Their line of thought was simple. Fifteen casualties was not a small price to pay, but at the very least, some of them would be able to get out of there alive. That was much better than the expedition team being entirely annihilated within the formation.

"I am touched by your sentiments, but... can we really trust the Scarletleaf King to keep his word and give us the clues? Furthermore, can the clues he gives us really lead us out?" Zhang Xuan said grimly.

They were willing to selflessly put themselves on the line to forge a route for the others to advance on. But the problem was that... their sacrifice could turn out to be futile in this case!

Taking a step back, even if the Scarletleaf King really gave the clues to them, allowing them to escape from the formation, as master teachers, there were simply some principles that they would have to hold on to, even at the cost of their life. They would not sacrifice others for their own welfare!

Otherwise, what would become of the faith they had held onto dearly as master teachers all this while?

"What do we do then?"

The crowd also understood the logic behind Zhang Xuan's words,



but... after seeing so many of their comrades dying one after another, they simply could not stand it anymore. It was out of desperation that they chose such an extreme course of action.

Zhang Xuan shook his head bitterly. "I have no idea..."

At this point, he had no idea how the formation operated or where the Scarletleaf King was. Without such vital information, there was no way he could formulate a feasible plan to help them get out of their current situation.

"You don't know?" Seeing that even Zhang Xuan was helpless before their current situation, the faces of the crowd sank as if deflated balloons.

In their journey together, Zhang Xuan had overcome obstacle after obstacle easily, and it felt as if there was nothing in the world that could stump him. At this point, seeing how even the most capable individual among them was helpless, they suddenly felt deeply lost.

"I can't stand it anymore! Didn't the Scarletleaf King say that it will suffice as long as fifteen of us die? Just make sure to avenge me when the rest of you escape from here!"

After a long moment of silence, a loud bellow abruptly sounded. Unable to take it any longer, a combat master raised his sword to end his life.

"Hold it right there!" Not expecting that someone would still attempt to commit suicide after he had already laid everything out so clearly, Zhang Xuan frowned deeply as he flicked his finger.

Ding!

A surge of zhenqi knocked out the sword in the combat master's hand. Wu shi also swiftly stepped forward to seal the other party's cultivation.

The problem they were facing at the moment was not an issue that could be resolved with just the sacrifice of others. They could

not just stake their lives on the integrity of the Scarletleaf King, if he had any at all. That would be utter foolishness!

They had to think of another plan.

"Don't stop me! Let me die..." the combat master continued bellowing loudly.

The sealing of his cultivation did not seem to have dispelled the combat master's intention of ending his life at all.

"Since you aren't going to allow us to end our lives, allow me to do the job then..."

Almost immediately after they managed to settle the issue with the combat master, another roar sounded, and a master teacher stepped forward to launch an attack toward the combat master beside him.

"Humph!" Seeing the act of aggression by the master teacher, Feng Xun flitted forward and kicked the master teacher away forcefully.

Peng!

With a spurt of blood, the master teacher crashed heavily onto the ground, sustaining severe injuries.

"Feng Xun, what are you doing?" Shen Pingchao hurriedly rushed down to help the wounded master teacher up before glaring at Feng Xun wrathfully.

The wounded master teacher was an elder of their Luoqing Master Teacher Academy.

"What am I doing? For daring to assault our men, you should be glad that I didn't kill him on the spot!" Feng Xun roared angrily back.

Their combat masters had been standing on the spot, doing nothing at all, when the master teacher suddenly stepped forward to assault them. Had he not made a move, their combat master

could have very well died! Yet, the other party was still asking what was he doing? He must be joking!

"I reckon that you are just finding an excuse to make a move against us. Since that's the case, why don't you start with me?" Shen Pingchao harrumphed coldly.

"You'd better not piss me off. Throughout this entire journey, your men have been nothing but a huge burden, and I have been wanting to give you a piece of my mind..." Feng Xun sneered coldly.

Not expecting the expedition team to end up arguing with one another while in such danger, Wu shi roared angrily, "Enough!

"We are all master teachers and combat masters! While we have come to this ancient domain with the conviction to lay down our lives for our mission, it would be utterly foolish to turn against one another under the provocations of an Otherworldly Demon. If that happens, how are we going to face our predecessors? How are we going to face Kong shi?"

"Humph!" Hearing Wu shi's lecture, Feng Xun and Shen Pingchao glanced at one another before turning away angrily. For the time being, they chose to suppress their rage.

"Alright, take a deep breath and cool down first. For the time being, let's discuss how we can escape from here," Guild Leader Han said.

"How can we escape from here? This formation has a complex layered design with traps lying in wait at every turn. Furthermore, even if we manage to escape from the formation, will we be a match for the Scarletleaf King?" Feng Xun said with a deep frown.

"I fought with the Stoneleaf King myself, and even if Wu shi utilizes his full strength, he will only be an equal to the Stoneleaf King... Considering the greater strength that the Scarletleaf King harnesses, I don't think that we stand a good chance of getting out

of here alive."

"I still think that we should sacrifice fifteen among us to obtain the other party's clues. As long as we preserve the strongest of our forces, we should still be able to match the Scarletleaf King. Otherwise, who knows how many of us will die within this formation?" the other Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall, Jiang Yuan, said.

"But if we do so, we will be playing right into the Scarletleaf King's hands..." Wu shi frowned.

"Playing right into the Scarletleaf King's hands? You might be right, but do we have another choice? To tell you the truth, I am very certain that there is a spy among us. Otherwise, how could the Otherworldly Demons have such a tight grasp of our movements? How could they remain constantly ahead of us? Don't you think that it's too much to consider it a coincidence?" Jiang Yuan said.

"Spy? How is that possible? We are all master teachers, so how could there possibly be any traitors among us?" Wu shi shook his head.

"You Xu was also a master teacher himself, but didn't he betray mankind eventually?" Jiang Yuan pointed it out coldly.

"This..." A conflicted expression surfaced on Wu shi's face. Frowning, he turned to Jiang Yuan and asked, "Jiang shi, for you to speak such words, could it be that you have noticed something?"

"I did notice a few things that are amiss with the situation..." Jiang Yuan harrumphed coldly before turning to Luo Ruoxin with a sharp glint in his eyes. "Luo shi, there are a few questions that I would like to ask you."

Luo Ruoxin frowned. "Go ahead."

"When we first entered the ancient domain, even Wu shi and Guild Leader Han did not notice that it was a Spatial Formation, but somehow, you were able to tell with just a glance.

"In the Unbounded World, all of us were bewitched by the demonic tune and suffered significant depletion in our stamina and zhenqi, but somehow, you were the only one who remained relatively unharmed. Not only so, shortly after you left, our expedition team immediately came under the assault of the Otherworldly Demons.

"For the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion, none of us were aware that soul-type artifacts have the ability to fend off the corrosion, but somehow, you knew full well about it. In fact, thinking back, you were the one who told us to follow the footsteps of the Otherworldly Demons... but look at this. We ended up walking right into their trap!"

Jiang Yuan sneered coldly. "How do you intend to explain this?"

"Now that he has pointed that out, it does indeed seem a little fishy..."

"Indeed, isn't everything that has happened a little too coincidental? There is something wrong with this Luo shi!"

"At the very start, I thought that it was weird that Luo shi would request to join the expedition at the very last minute. Now that I look at it, there is indeed something deeper to it..."

"Let's see how she responds to that..."

Huala!

Right after hearing Jiang Yuan's analysis, the faces of the crowd immediately darkened. They quickly stepped away from Luo Ruoxin, isolating her.

"You think that I am a spy?" Not expecting the other party to suddenly point his finger at her, Luo Ruoxin frowned in displeasure.

"Indeed. Disguising yourself as one of our own, you slowly led us into trap after trap. We sure were fools for listening blindly to your words. Of the Qingtian Lineage, there is only one who possesses

such wits and capability. If I'm not mistaken..."

Jiang Yuan glared at Luo Ruoxin sharply as he said, "You are the Skyleaf King!"

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# Chapter 1060: Jiang Yuan

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"Skyleaf King? Shouldn't the Skyleaf King be a male?"

"Indeed! From what I know, the Ten Great Kings of the Qingtian Lineage are all men..."

Since the Ten Great Kings of the Qingtian Lineage were all men, how could the Skyleaf King be a female?

"Who says that the Skyleaf King can't be a woman?" Jiang Yuan interjected. "The Skyleaf King has always been an enigma to the Master Teacher Pavilion. All we know is that she exists, but none of us have met her before. So, how can you be certain that the Skyleaf King is not a woman? Besides, even if the Skyleaf King is a man, given that he has already reached the Leaving Aperture realm, it should be easy for someone of his prowess to possess the body of a human and mix in among us!"

"This..."

Hearing those words, the crowd clenched their fists tightly as they directed wary gazes toward Luo Ruoxin.

Indeed, a cultivator who had reached the Leaving Aperture realm was capable of drawing their Primordial Spirit out of their body. On top of harnessing immense strength and the freedom of movement, they were capable of possessing the bodies of others as well! Furthermore, unlike soul oracles, they wouldn't suffer from the Possession Decline either. At most, their Primordial Spirit would just be incompatible with the body they were in, causing them to be unable to draw out their full strength!

It could be said that... if the Skyleaf King had truly possessed Luo Ruoxin, no one would be any the wiser, and this was including even Wu shi!

Recalling Luo Ruoxin's actions, while she had not spoken much after entering the ancient domain, every word that she had spoken

was of the utmost importance to the progression of their journey. No matter how knowledgeable a twenty-year-old woman was, could she still be more well-read than Wu shi and Guild Leader Han?

Could she have really been possessed by the Skyleaf King, intentionally using her words to lead the crowd from one trap into another along the journey?

Wu shi was just about to say something when he suddenly paused for a brief moment. Frowning deeply, he turned to the young lady and said, "This... It would be best for you to explain this matter!"

To be honest, Jiang Yuan's analysis did make sense. There were indeed several doubtful aspects about the young lady before them.

While Luo Ruoxin did have a close relationship with Mu shi, whose recommendation had allowed her to join the expedition team, up to this point, Wu shi still had no idea how powerful she was. Even with eye of discernment of his level, he was unable to see through the young lady.

Despite being doubted by everyone else, Luo Ruoxin did not bother to explain herself. Instead, she shook her head before asking, "Is that what all of you think?"

"Y-you... You can't really be an Otherworldly Demon in disguise, can you?" Feng Xun's face paled as he backed away fearfully.

Had he actually fallen in love with an Otherworldly Demon, and one who could very well be a man? Just the thought of it left his hair standing on ends, and he felt like puking!

Seeing Feng Xun's response, Luo Ruoxin could not help but shake her head with a wry smile. That fellow claimed that he liked her, but in crucial times such as this, he didn't have the slightest trust in her.

Sighing deeply, Luo Ruoxin was just about to speak when a towering back suddenly appeared before her.



"Enough!" Zhang Xuan waved his hand. Turning around to shoot a glance at the young lady before him, he said, "I believe that she isn't an Otherworldly Demon, and she isn't being possessed by anyone either!"

Luo Ruoxin looked at Zhang Xuan and asked, "You trust me?"

"I do." Zhang Xuan said with a smile. There was earnestness in his eyes that could not possibly be faked. "Don't worry. No matter what others say, I will always stand by you!"

Of the entire expedition team, he was the one who had come the closest with this young lady. Along the way, the latter had been walking alongside them quietly, rarely allowing anything to bother her. If she was truly the Skyleaf King, considering the strength that she possessed, the expedition team would have been wiped out long ago. There was no need for her to go the extra mile to disguise herself.

Seeing that the other party's eyes were clear, devoid of the slightest hint of doubt, Luo Ruoxin could not help but feel a warmth in her heart. "What he said is true. The Otherworldly Demons attacked right after I left, and I was also the one who recommended following the Otherworldly Demons' trail before we stepped into this trap. There's no way I can refute those claims, so why do you still believe me?"

"Must there be a reason for trust?" Staring deeply into Luo Ruoxin's eyes, Zhang Xuan chuckled softly. "I will trust you no matter what you do. Don't worry, you don't have to say a word. I will resolve this matter for you!"

After saying those words, Zhang Xuan turned around and said, "I am willing to use my life to guarantee that Luo shi isn't the Skyleaf King or an Otherworldly Demon!"

"Use your life to guarantee? Principal Zhang... you have to reconsider it! What Combat Master Jiang isn't without sense..." Wu shi hurriedly tried to persuade him.

"Indeed, Principal Zhang. There's something amiss about Luo shi..."

The others also chirped in anxiously.

Principal Zhang was a person whom they deeply trusted and admired. Why would such a formidable master teacher end up falling before the skirt of a lady?

Seeing Zhang Xuan stepping forward to protect Luo Ruoxin, Jiang Yuan said with a deep frown, "It is due to Principal Zhang that we are still alive right now and have managed to come so far. If Principal Zhang truly intends to protect her, there is nothing I can say. However... if she truly is the Skyleaf King, not only will all of us die here, more importantly, our mission to find Zhang Yinqiu and the others will fail as well. The reputation of the Master Teacher Pavilion could very well be sullied due to this matter!"

Zhang Xuan flung his sleeves and harrumphed coldly. "I know what I am doing. I don't need you to teach me what to do!"

"You..." Not expecting the amiable Principal Zhang to suddenly disregard him altogether, Jiang Yuan clenched his fists tightly.

"Stop with your pathetic efforts to sway others; there's definitely nothing wrong with Luo shi. Instead, the one who has something wrong is you, Combat Master Jiang!" Zhang Xuan gazed upon Jiang Yuan coldly.

"There's something wrong with me? What could there possibly be wrong with me?" Jiang Yuan shook his head.

Throughout the entire journey, he had not spoken a word at all, and he had not given the wrong direction either. How could he be a spy for the Otherworldly Demons?

At the same time, the crowd were also perplexed to hear Zhang Xuan's abrupt accusation.

Instead of replying to Jiang Yuan's words, Zhang Xuan turned to the crowd and said, "We have passed through many courtyards so

far, and every single one of them has a formation that triggers as soon as we enter. I believe every single one of us here should have a deep impression of this matter."

"Un." The crowd nodded.

They had met many perilous situations ever since entering the celestial palace. Each time, they would barely escape with their lives. Even when their companions died right before their eyes, they did not even have the time to collect their corpses so as to give them a proper burial later on.

"Every single courtyard that we enter poses a threat of its own... but did you notice that despite having entered this courtyard for some time, nothing has happened at all? Other than the words that the Scarletleaf King said before leaving, it doesn't seem like anything has happened at all, right?"

Zhang Xuan looked at the crowd and said, "Don't you think that it's bizarre?"

"This..." The crowd fell silent.

Just as the other party said, the courtyards that they had been through thus far had been extremely dangerous, and the slightest carelessness could have resulted in their deaths. However, they had already been in the current courtyard for more than twenty minutes, but nothing had happened at all. Initially, they thought that it might just have been a safe zone, but thinking deeper into the matter at this moment... was it really possible for there to be a safe zone in this massive formation?

"Isn't it just because the Scarletleaf King didn't activate the formation? He has probably just changed his plans and is trying to have us kill one another instead..." one of the combat masters said.

"You're right in saying that he is trying to have us kill one another, but... I can tell you that the formation in this courtyard has already been activated!" Zhang Xuan said.

Guild Leader Han was taken aback by those words. "You are saying that... we are currently standing amid an activated formation at this very moment?"

As the head of the Qingyuan Empire Formation Master Guild, a 7-star pinnacle formation master, if a formation had truly been activated where they were standing, he should have noticed it!

"That's right!" Zhang Xuan nodded grimly. "There is a formation in this courtyard, and it has already been active for some time. In fact, we are currently under its effects!"

"This..." Everyone glanced at one another with bewildered expressions.

They might not have been as skilled as Guild Leader Han in the field of formations, but as master teachers and combat masters, they should still have been able to discern whether they were in a formation or not. Their surroundings were completely silent, and there was not the slightest disturbance in the spiritual energy to be felt. Given so, how could they possibly be standing amid an activated formation?

At this point, Zhang Xuan turned to Shen Pingchao and asked, "Principal Zhang, may I ask how Elder Gan usually conducts himself in the Luoqing Master Teacher Academy?"

The person whom Zhang Xuan addressed as Elder Gan was the master teacher who had charged forward previously to kill the combat masters.

"Elder Gan is a true master teacher through and through. Due to his amiable and patient personality, he is well-received by the students..." Shen Pingchao wasn't sure why Zhang Xuan would ask such a question, but he still answered it earnestly after pondering over it for a moment.

Normally speaking, Elder Gan could not even bring himself to reprimand students who had erred, thus earning him a good

reputation within the Master Teacher Academy. It was also in view of this that Shen Pingchao was extremely protective of him... As such, he was willing to stand up against even Feng Xun for Elder Gan's sake.

Seemingly knowing that Shen Pingchao would respond in such a manner, Zhang Xuan asked calmly, "An amiable and patient teacher suddenly raised his sword to kill another... Don't you think that it's a very bizarre situation in itself?"

"This..."

The crowd was stunned by the questioning.

Guild Leader Han suddenly thought of something, and he immediately asked with a grim look, "Could it be that... there is some kind of special formation in this courtyard that interferes with our thoughts and emotions, causing us to become more hot-tempered than usual?"

"Indeed. That is precisely why the Scarletleaf King chose to appear right at this moment, saying those words so as to plant a seed in our minds. After which, he secretly activated the formation to affect our emotions... Have you all realized that, within just a short twenty minutes, we have become more violent-tempered and irrational than before?" Zhang Xuan posed.

The crowd was rendered speechless.

That was indeed the case.

Previously, when they were in the other courtyards, they would still proceed as carefully as they could so as to reduce their casualties. Yet, after entering the current courtyard, they realized that the thought that had been dominating their minds was how they could kill others or commit suicide so as to make up for the required fifteen slots!

Thinking back, their thoughts had truly been irrational. It was due to such thoughts that resulted in the conflict among them.

After hearing those words, Feng Xun and Shen Pingchao glanced at one another as cold sweat drenched their backs.

Had Wu shi not stopped them previously, they might have ended up doing something unforgivable to the other party!

"Everyone ended up succumbing to it, and not even Combat Master Feng Xun was an exception..." At this point, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze toward Jiang Yuan. "I am just curious to know how the great Combat Master Jiang managed to avoid the effects of the formation and even rationally argue that there is a problem with Luo shi and that she is the Skyleaf King?"

"Indeed! Could it be that you aren't affected by the formation?"

Innumerable gazes immediately turned toward Jiang Yuan.

"I..." Jiang Yuan eyebrows shot up inconspicuously for a short moment before sneering coldly. Shaking his head, he said, "Principal Zhang, please don't change the topic at hand. I might be unaffected by the effects of the formation, but the same goes for you and Luo shi, isn't that so? Each of us have differing experiences and encounters in life, and thus, our personality and mental fortitude are different. You can't cast doubt on me just because I am different from the others, right?"

"You are right. Just the fact that you are unaffected by the formation isn't enough evidence to suspect you..."

At this point, Zhang Xuan looked at Jiang Yuan with an enigmatic smile. "But both you and Feng Xun are Thousand Men Commanders of the Combat Master Hall. The both of you are equal in terms of standing, but throughout the entire journey, you have hardly spoken a word. It is as if you do not exist at all. Even when your subordinates were attacked, you acted as if it had nothing to do with you at all. Don't you think that you are being a little too... impassive?"

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